

**INTERVENTION AND ASSISTANCE TO WIDOWS AND ORPHANS
IMPACTED BY HIV/AIDS: FOCUSING ON INHERITANCE UNDER THE
CUSTOMARY PROCESSES, IN THE INTERFAITH COMMUNITIES OF
ZIMBABWE.**

by

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ABSTRACT

INTERVENTION AND ASSISTANCE TO WIDOWS AND ORPHANS IMPACTED BY HIV/AIDS: FOCUSING ON INHERITANCE UNDER THE CUSTOMARY PROCESSES IN THE INTERFAITH COMMUNITIES OF ZIMBABWE

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The purpose of this project was to present a wholistic approach that would serve to empower the widows and orphans in the interfaith communities in City United Methodist Church in Harare, the Uniting Presbyterian Churches of Mabvuko and Mbare, and the African Apostolic Church of Johane Maranke in Chitungwiza, Zimbabwe, who have been impacted by HIV/AIDS. This project, denominated as "Resurrection Ministry" by the writer, focused on inheritance as recognized under the customary processes in Zimbabwe, as one of the resources that can be utilized to empower the widows and orphans. Forty (40) women comprised Group A and twenty (20) youths, between the ages of twelve (12) and nineteen (19), represented Group B.

Group A participated in a tri-dimensional strategy that consisted of questionnaires, group sessions/workshops and experiential activities. The group sessions/workshops operated on the principles of informed pedagogy whose aim is to convey information to the widows that will assist them in knowing how to acquire and manage the estates of their deceased spouses. Retired judiciaries educated the participants on easy-to-understand versions of the inheritance laws as well as the customary processes concerning beneficiaries of estates. The commonality that presented in these endeavors is

how to take advantage of the existing customary and judicial resources that would accord the widows and orphans the opportunities to return and re-assert themselves as beloved and contributing members of the community.

The youth group was divided into two groups: one group for girls and the other group for boys. Senior women from the interfaith communities trained adolescent girls in the following areas: responsible management of their individual lives, personal hygiene, child development, independence and continuing/completing educational endeavors. These areas of emphasis provided much needed information to adolescent girls who assume the 'mothering' tasks of their younger siblings.

In a similar manner, men of integrity in the various churches were appointed as mentors for the young boys. The men encouraged the boys in the Christian faith in weekly sessions. Each session integrated orthodoxy with orthopraxy. The mentors accompanied and transported the young men to sporting events and visitations to needy persons. These opportunities engendered a role-model system for the youth and foster male-to-male relationships of positivism between the senior men and the young men.

The project proceeded from a fundamental hypothesis that surmised that the customary inheritance processes in the Zimbabwean culture can be dynamically employed to empower widows and orphans who have been adversely affected by HIV/AIDS in ways that allow them to experience dignity and worth in the community. All of the above-mentioned activities in the Resurrection Ministry project focused on instilling self-worth, confidence and a sense of belonging in the participants. The model of ministry documented in the project worked to provide the support, education,

information and assistance needed to assist widows and orphans in their navigation of their lives after the death of the principal breadwinners in the family.

DEDICATION

Sweet mother, I will never forget you.

If I did not sleep, you never slept.

If I did not eat, you never ate.

You never tired of me.

Sweet mother, I will never forget you.

(Prince Nico Mbarga, songwriter/musician)

I dedicate this doctoral dissertation to the everlasting loving memory of my beloved mother, Matilda Anna Hammond; my paternal grandmother, Sarah Nuertsoe Narku of Anerwe Wegwa, Pampram, Greater Accra Region of Ghana; to my wife, Charity and to our son, Jabulani Seth Nii-Mensah. I am equally committed to the memory of Reverend Christopher Jokomo, Bishop of the Zimbabwe Conference of the United Methodist Church. Finally, I dedicate this body of work to the memory of my great grandfather, Nene (Chief) John Edward Tetteh Apema Nartey, who succeeded as a merchant and Mankralo of Prampram and as the individual who introduced Methodism in the Dangbe Shai traditional areas of Greater Accra Region of Ghana. May this enterprise glorify God and illumine the path of millions in ministry.

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- The Pastors, presbyters, members and laity of the City Church (UMC) of Harare, the Uniting Presbyterian Churches of Mabvuko and St. Mary's;
- Reverend Victor Abbey, District Pastor and the full membership of the Eben-Ezer Presbyterian Church, Osu, Accra, Ghana, for their prayers;
- The members of the Vapostori sects of Mbare and Chitungwiza and the Moslem brothers and sisters of Mabvuko;
- Solomon Puplampu, my cousin who provided a residence for two years of my study;
- Dr. Sam Solomon for moral and material support; Mr. Robert Azu, Mrs. Mabel Quayson, Ms. Grace Dowuona , Mrs. Harriett Kotey and Ms. Elizabeth Manko for their prayers;
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- Dr. Maxine Waddell, Pastor of Antioch Baptist Christian Church in Atlanta, Georgia, for her proficiency in the editing process.

This work would surely not reached a point of completion had it not been for the ongoing support provided by the Doctor of Ministry Program at the Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta, Georgia. Dr. Stephen Rasor, Director of the Doctor of Ministry Program, consistently offered mentoring, counseling and moral support. Dr. Edward Smith, Chairperson of the Doctor of Ministry Program, served as an ambassador of encouragement. Finally, Mrs. Cece Dixon, Personal Assistant of the Doctor of Ministry Program, who engendered inspiration.

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Glossary of Terms and Expressions from the Shona Communities:

Chimutsa mapfiwa: deceased woman's relative given to her husband as replacement wife

Dare remusha: family council

Kuenda kugata: visit to a diviner to ascertain the cause of death

Kugara nhaka: custom by which a deceased man's relative, usually a brother, is chosen by the widow to be her husband

Kugarwa nhaka: custom by which a widow becomes the wife of the chosen relative

Kupisa guva: unacceptable behavior by a widow or a widower in violation of the traditional waiting period of one year following the death of a spouse

Kurova guva: traditional ceremony performed approximately one year after the death of a family member in order to bring his/her wondering spirit back into the family. This is done by the living for protection and to provide a link with the living-dead.

Maiguru: the senior wife in a polygamous situation; also refers to the matriarch of the family or the wife of the elder brother, regardless of her age.

Mainini: the junior wife in a polygamous marriage. It could also mean a younger sister of a mother, or the wife of a junior brother regardless of her age.

Mawoko: property acquired by a woman through her own industry

Mukwasha: son in-law as recognized by the wife's family

Muzukuru: the child or a grandchild of a sister or father's sister

N'ganga: traditional healer/diviner or herbalist

Ngozi: vengeful spirit (usually of the dead)

Nherera: an orphan

Pfuma: wealth

Roora: bride-wealth or dowry

Sahwira: an intimate/close friend, respected member of the community who may represent the family in negotiation of the dowry/bride-wealth in marriage

Sarapavana: designated guardian of a deceased man's children

Shirikadzi: a widow

Tete: sister of a married man or sister of a father

Verudzi: paternal relatives

Glossary of HIV/AIDS Terms:

- AIDS:** Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome; which means the body loses the ability to fight against infections because the immune is weakened by HIV
- ART:** Antiretroviral Therapy
- ARV:** Antiretroviral; which means drugs that fight retroviruses (such as HIV)
- BCC:** behavior change communication
- CAA:** children affected by AIDS
- CEDAW:** Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women
- CEDC:** Children in Exceptionally Difficult Circumstances
- Dementia:** (AIDS dementia) loss of control of thought, emotion, personality and behavior through progressive brain damage caused by HIV, similar to senile dementia
- DISCORDANT:** in relation to HIV, two test results on one person where one gives an HIV-positive result and the other an HIV-negative result; discordant couple, where one person is HIV positive and the other HIV negative
- Endemic:** normally occurring and widespread at a stable level
- Epidemic:** an unusual marked increase in cases in a short period of time
- FOCUS:** Families, Orphans and Children Under Stress
- ICWLH:** International Community of Women Living with HIV
- HIV:** Human Immunodeficiency Syndrome
- Prevalence:** the level of existing infection in a population at one point in time, regardless of when the infection occurred
- Safe sex:** limited sexual activity in which no semen or vaginal fluid enters another person's body, or full sexual intercourse with a condom and ideally a microbicide; any normal sexual

activity between non-infected persons is safe sex

Screening for HIV: analyzing for HIV the blood of whole populations or of groups within a population (or instance to measure incidence or prevalence or to screen out HIV-positive blood donors)

SafAIDS: southern Africa HIV/AIDS Information Dissemination Service

Shingles: painful inflammation of nerve endings with a blistering skin rash, normally on one side of the body only. Shingles usually occur when the immune system is impaired, and is common with HIV infection

Window phase: the time period between initial infection with HIV and the production of antibodies - usually three months. During this time, an HIV antibody test will be negative although the person presents with the virus

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The interfaith communities in the country of Zimbabwe served as the focal group of this report. The issue that confronted the researcher in these communities was the matter of HIV/AIDS and its grave impact on the widows and orphans who occupy the townships of Harare, Mabvuko, Mbare, and Chitungwiza.

Owing to the fact that the researcher is a long-standing permanent resident of Zimbabwe and having lived in the country for the better part of twenty-seven years, this project did not proceed from a dispassionate objective posture. Rather, the researcher understood that the widows and orphans who are impacted by HIV/AIDS can be denominated as members of his family. Therefore, the researcher embarked upon a vigorous examination of the ministry issue.

Ministry Issue

The ministry issue for the project was how to assist the surviving wives and children of the Zimbabwean men who succumb to complications of HIV/AIDS in recovering the estate of the decedent in order to support and maintain themselves and their families. The researcher set forth to determine whether the resources in the interfaith communities and those embedded in the traditions of the country would allow them to become beneficiaries of the deceased's estate and manage the said estate for their welfare and that of the remaining family members. The matter proved crucial to the researcher and he was able to deposit his passion to those who assisted in the implementation of the project.

A group of women and a group of youth, both male and female, participated in the

Resurrection Ministry project. The participants engaged in seminars, career guidance activities and other resources that provided practical, spiritual and emotional support that should propel them to self-worth and re-engagement with the community.

Zimbabwe: The Land and its People

From the outset, it must be noted that for the purposes of this study no particular ethnic group served as the primary focus for the project. However, the HIV/AIDS demographic profiles resulted from the interfaith communities of Harare, Mabvuko, Mbare and Chitungwiza. In order to provide a more cogent presentation of the project, the discussion surrounding the ministry context proceeds from a dissemination of information about Zimbabwe in general and the above named townships in particular.

Zimbabwe, a land locked country that covers an area of 150,804 square miles - slightly larger than Montana - is bordered by Zambia to the north, South Africa to the south, Mozambique to the east, and Botswana to the west. Twelve million plus people from a number of ethnic groups inhabit the country. The major ones are the Shona who comprise about 79%, the Ndebele about 16%, Europeans of Caucasian origin (less than one percent), and the rest a smattering of Asians and descendants of Zambian, Malawian and Mozambican peoples who came in as migrant labor during the colonial period.

In the latter part of 1887, a group of white South African miners led by Cecil John Rhodes, an English upstart, in search of *el dorado*, the land full of gold, crossed the Great Zambezi River and settled in the land, which later bore his name. Under the auspices of the South Africa Company, an entity that he founded, Cecil Rhodes administered the country as his personal property until 1923 when the British annexed

the country.¹ A 1961 constitution favored whites and this minority white settler regime unilaterally declared independence in 1965. Consequently, armed nationalist movements mounted a protracted war of liberation for more than two decades, which resulted in free elections in 1979 and independence of Zimbabwe in 1980. The focus of the struggle was two-fold: to have full voting rights and to regain possession of their finite heritage - the land.

The Lancaster House Agreement, by which the accord for independence was crafted, placed constraints on the Zimbabwean Government and could do very little to address the land issue, the *raison d'être* why the war of liberation was executed, anyway. The long wait coupled with the inactivity on the part of the Government to address the land issue, resulted in making a majority of the people who live in the rural areas restive. Consequently, spontaneous demonstrations tinged with violence ensued during which some white commercial farmers were forcibly evicted from their farms/homes. With little or no elbowroom for the Government to maneuver, it hastily responded to redistribute the land, which to some extent had become rather chaotic and unreasonable.

The European Union and the United States of America vehemently condemned the government of Zimbabwe, unashamedly goaded and brazenly supported opposition political parties to overthrow the government, placed caveats on the in-flow of assistance into the country, and introduced sanctions, which have crippled the economy. Contrary to

¹It was over fifty years since the *voortrekkers*, the Boer pioneers of the Great Trek, had shaken the dust of Cape Colony off their feet. In their canvas-covered wagons, followed by their cattle, sheep and African servants, they had splashed across the drifts of the Orange and Vaal Rivers to carve out an empire in the 'empty' veld to the north. On June 27, 1890, it was the turn for a Great Trek, British-style, out-Boering the Boers - a leap out of Cape Colony, clean over the Boer republics, past Matabeleland into Mashonaland. It was here that Cecil Rhodes would use his pioneers to create his own kingdom, 'Rhodesia', in the still 'emptier' land between the Limpopo and the Zambezi, 300 miles to the north of the Transvaal. Thomas Pakenham, *The Scramble For Africa 1876-1912*. (London, UK: George Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1998), p 372.

what western propaganda has made the rest of the world perceive about Zimbabwe, the Africa Union believes that Zimbabwe is being unduly punished because white commercial farmers are being adversely affected. Secondly, corporate America and the rest of the western world believe that what has happened in Zimbabwe (if not nipped in the bud) could influence similar uprisings in Australia by the Aborigines, in parts of South America by the indigenous Indian populations, and, worse still, in South Africa, by the black majority - who seem to be sitting on a time bomb. (The Government of Australia has recently rendered an apology to the Aborigines for inhuman treatment and deprivation).²

Now Zimbabwe is struggling with an unsustainable fiscal deficit, a grotesque exchange rate, soaring inflation (over 4000% at the time of writing), and bare store shelves. The damaged commercial farming sector, intermittent droughts coupled with lack of badly needed support from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, have turned Zimbabwe into a net importer of food products and lost her position as the hitherto breadbasket of the Southern Africa sub-region. Estimates from July 2006 explicitly take into account the effects of excess mortality including infants at 51.71 deaths per 4000 live births due to HIV/AIDS.³ Life expectancy, previously the highest in the entire sub-region, has been reduced to 39.29 years. According to the 2005 estimate by the World Bank country report unemployment rate is 80%.⁴

Ironically, the inflationary posture and the failure to produce sufficient food

²New York Times of Feb 13, 2008.

³World Bank Country Report of 2006, 120.

⁴Ibid.

supplies for her people, have contributed to Zimbabwe's increase in the area of HIV/AIDS. Experts from the World Health Organization indicate that food will soon replace drugs as the most pressing need. This is particularly alarming given the fact that without adequate nutrition, AIDS sufferers are unable to digest the drugs needed to slow the virus. "When you have the medicine and don't have the food, then the bigger problem becomes food security. Patients who lack adequate nutrition are six times more likely to die than those with good nutrition", reports an epidemiologist of the World Health Organization resident in Harare.⁵

The writer conducted interviews with several persons in the ministry settings in Harare, Mabvuko, Mbare, and Chitungwiza in regards to their refusal to take the free drugs that had been prescribed for their AIDS condition. "Sometimes I would eat once a day, oftentimes not at all, because I was unable to find any food", said Mary. Her emaciated body evidenced the situation that the lack of food caused to exacerbate her illness. Having lost her meager earnings as a schoolteacher after falling ill to the virus, Mary lost ten members of her nuclear and extended families to the virus.⁶

Bread, sugar and mealie (sic) meal (corn meal) - staples in the Zimbabwean diet - have vanished from the food supply. Meat has become virtually non-existent, even for persons who have money to purchase it on the black market. The food situation has become so egregious in the whole of Africa that Stephen Lewis, United Nations special Envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa, called the lack of funding for food 'madness.' According to Lewis, "Health professionals choose not to be food distributors. However, they need to

⁵Interview conducted by the writer with WHO personnel in Harare, Zimbabwe in July 2006.

⁶Interview conducted by the writer in Chitungwiza suburb, July 2006.

be in the business of handing out food.”⁷

Raw materials are drying up because suppliers are being forced to sell to factories at a loss. For inexplicable reasons, the government is slowly but steadily moving towards nationalizing major sectors of the economy. Leaders in industry and commerce were unanimous in their assessment of the situation when they stated, “Zimbabwe’s economy has been shrinking since 2000, buffered by political turmoil, capital flight, but never has it been direr than now.”⁸

The vast majority of people in the street have long been unable to afford food.

The situation for persons residing in the rural areas is more tenable for those who can grow their food. One pastor in an interfaith community outside of the capital stated, “We stay afloat with food and money sent by the nearly two million of our compatriots who live abroad. Remittances are so vital that in some border towns and villages the South African Rand has replaced the Zimbabwe dollar.”⁹

If the situation for non-HIV infected persons is harsh, it is even more egregious for those Zimbabweans who find themselves living with the virus. Besides the lack of food, which has resulted in malnutrition and starvation, regular medical care at hospitals and clinics for HIV/AIDS infected persons has been curtailed due to the fuel shortage crisis.

Thousands of people who live in the densely populated suburbs and townships suffered unemployment due to the lack of available transportation to their jobs. Furthermore, with teeming unemployed people roaming the streets of the townships,

⁷United Nations Conference Report on AIDS (Ontario, August 2007).

⁸Interview conducted with the Zimbabwe National Chamber of Commerce and Industry on condition that their identities not be revealed for fear of recrimination, July 2006.

⁹Interview conducted with a retired pastor in Mabvuko, whose name is being withheld for fear of recrimination, July 2006.

prostitution appeared as the most viable means of earning money. Thus, the spread of HIV/AIDS increased substantially.

Empirical Literature: HIV/AIDS in Zimbabwe

The Inner City United Methodist Church, the Uniting Presbyterian Churches of Mabvuko and St. Mary, and the Vapostori Apostolic Sect of Chitungwiza predominate the writer's project and context of ministry. In this regard, the writer attempts to provide substantive documentation on the impact of HIV/AIDS and the behavioral changes that emanate from the same from the point of views of the above-named interfaith communities. The author adopted an approach that interfaces the theological, historical, cultural and traditional beliefs of the congregations who stand in the HIV/AIDS aftershocks.

While thousands of scientists, journalists and other health care professionals in Diaspora countries debate the origin of AIDS in the comfort of lecture halls and other venues, thousands of women, men, and children of all ages are perishing by the hour on the continent of Africa, especially in Zimbabwe. It was with this glaring distinction in mind, that the writer sought to find ways of addressing the matter of the future of the widows and orphans who are left behind from the ravages of AIDS.

During the recent years, Jackson D. Mutangadura,¹⁰ D. Mukarazita Kukarazita, Mutemi P. Sakoe,¹¹ R. Siamwiza and M Ursa¹² joined the ranks of African authors who

¹⁰Jackson D. Mutangadura and D. Mutarazita, "AIDS and Smallholder Agriculture" in SAfAIDS (1999): 35-58.

¹¹Mutemi P. Sakoe and C. Blari, *Another Song Begins: Children Orphaned by AIDS in Kenya: Socio-Economic Impact and Policy Implications* (Washington: Family Health International USAid/AIDSCAP, 1996), 45-64.

¹²Berma R. Ursa, J. Ng'wewesheni, R. Nsingo and Y. Kamugo, "Orphanhood, Child Fostering and the AIDS Epidemic in Rural Tanzania", in *Health Transition Review &* (1997): 141-153.

possess the credentials to add to the literature on this situation in the country of Zimbabwe and in the continent of Africa. Unlike the western counterparts, these writers are penning tomes that relate the life and death struggle of their sons and daughters, wives, husbands, friends and foes. They have first hand information concerning the topics they write.

Helen Jackson in her book, *AIDS Africa: Continent in Crisis*, concentrates her writings on the hardest-hit countries in Southern Africa, including Zimbabwe.¹³ The writer gives an in-depth account on how the effects of HIV/AIDS permeate societies, affecting children, women, men, rich and poor, and threatening short and long-term development across all sectors of the economy.¹⁴

For the first time, here is an author at the epicenter of this monstrous catastrophe - exploring the driving forces behind the pandemic, the impact of HIV/AIDS at different levels, and policies and programs to make a difference. The author provides a comprehensive overview of preventive, care and impact mitigation, giving up-dated information and raising challenging issues for policy makers, planners, program managers, and professionals in health and human development.

There are many countries outside Africa, especially in Asia and Eastern Europe and even North America, where HIV/AIDS is spreading at an alarming rate. But nowhere else has the disease yet become a threat to economic, social, religious and political stability on the scale that it has now in Southern Africa and Eastern Africa. AIDS has claimed in recent years ten times more people in Africa than the ravages of civil strife

¹³Helen Jackson, *AIDS Africa: A Continent in Crisis* (Zimbabwe:SAfAIDS, 2002), 11.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 212.

and armed conflicts in Ethiopia, Eritrea, Liberia, Somalia, Sierra Leone, Southern Sudan, Burundi, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Angola put together. Because HIV/AIDS affects the productive age range in the population, where the pandemic is most serious, it impacts productivity in the industrial, mining, commercial and farming activities both at the provincial and national levels.¹⁵

By the end of 1999, nearly 1.4 million Zimbabweans - one in every four between the ages of 15 years and 49 years of age - were believed to be living with HIV/AIDS. Approximately 56,000 children contracted HIV. Since the beginning of the epidemic in the early 1980's, nearly one million children have lost their mother or both parents to the disease. Each year the number of Zimbabweans who expire from the disease increases, while two thousand persons contract it on weekly basis.¹⁶

The impact is felt initially at household and community level where the church and the community rendezvous. It has taken longer for the macro-economic impacts to be recognized at different levels, but in Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, Republic of South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe, the impact is becoming increasingly clear. It must be pointed out quickly that even though references have been made about the disease in mainland southern African countries, Zimbabwe and the Innercity City United Methodist Church, the Uniting Presbyterian Churches of Mabvuko and St. Mary, and the Vapostori Apostolic Sect of Chitungwiza, remain the primary focus. The vast majority of HIV transmission in the above-named interfaith communities occurs during sexual intercourse between heterosexual partners, with the remaining transmissions occurring between

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Ibid.

mother and child during pregnancy and breastfeeding.

An infected mother is likely to have been infected by her partner. It is estimated that between sixty to eighty percent of African women with HIV have engaged in sex with only one partner. However, these women were in marital positions that did not allow them to negotiate safe sex or to prevent their partners from having additional sexual contacts with other infected persons. Transmission can also occur through the injection of recreational drugs such as heroin, but this is not a major cause in Zimbabwe.¹⁷

When both parents die because of the disease, responsibility for the maintenance of the remaining family falls to the oldest sibling of either gender. However, life becomes more burdensome for older girl siblings than for boys who are compelled to care for younger siblings. At a tender age with few extended family members to provide assistance and limited or no access to the remaining estate of the deceased, these girls easily fall prey to the AIDS virus. In their desperate attempts to earn money for the upkeep of the family, these young victims resort to plying in the sex trade, which is a surefire way to acquiring the virus.

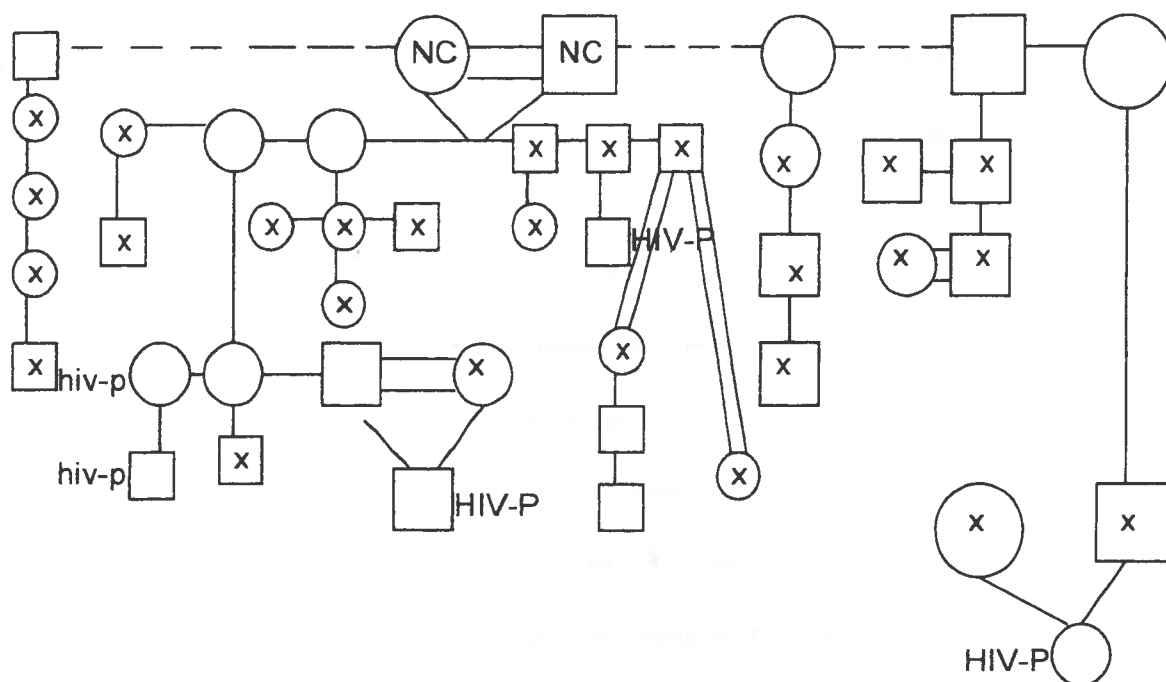
Additionally on the other hand, the virus affects primarily young to middle age adults, on whom both the national economy and of earning money which increases the spread of HIV. Whenever the majority of the primary income-producing segment of a society succumbs to the virus, disaster awaits. Such a confluence of circumstances renders downturns in the economic and social sectors of the country.

¹⁷The discovery of HIV, initially called GRID¹S or Gray-related Immune Syndrome, AIDS had been identified in gay men in the US in 1980/81. In 1983, Louis Montagnier and his team at the Pasteur Institute in Paris identified HIV. A year later Robert Gallo and his team in the US cultivated the virus, leading to a long drawn-out wrangle over attribution. Later, HIV was found to have two main sub types, HIV-1 and HIV-2 occurring mainly in West Africa and to a much lesser extent elsewhere, and HIV-1 spreading much more extensively around the globe. HIV-1 in particular has numerous variants, but both viruses mutate or change in the body over time. HIV-2 also leads to AIDS, but apparently more slowly, and it appears less easily passed on through sex.



Owing to frequency of deaths, cemeteries that hitherto were trimmed with manicured lawns and flowers, now look like burying grounds in a war zone.

MORTALITY AS A RESULT OF HIV/AIDS OF A FAMILY IN ZIMBABWE OVER A PERIOD OF FIFTEEN YEARS



○ = Female
 □ = Male
 ----- = Connected blood relations
 NC = Natural Causes
 X = Died of HIV

MINISTRY CONTEXT

Ministry context is segmented into three parts. The first part gives a detailed description of the ecclesiology, demographics, general administrative structure, mode of worship, and generational divides in the congregations. The second part deals with the modus operandi, which is the hands-on approach that was utilized in addressing the issues relative to the pastoral staff and other elected officers. The third part covers the rationale and the function of the churches as a whole in the face of the problems as they apply to the marginalized in the community.

The membership of the City Church (UMC) is one thousand; comprised of largely young couples within the age bracket of twenty eight to thirty-five years with the remainder being the elderly and adolescents. The writer was able to study the crucial role the generations play in shaping the congregations of the organizations within the interfaith community.

Because of its proximity to the head office of the Zimbabwe Annual Conference of the UMC, it seems the City Church holds pre-eminence in comparison to the other UMC local churches. The major asset of the church is its strategic location right at the center of the nation's capital, which makes it possible for it to have more new people joining its ranks. The church was founded in 1977 and it is growing. One interesting phenomenon is that because it is comparatively young in outlook, it is vibrant and attracts young people. For this same reason, the church has had its fair share of victims to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. It must be stated that study carried out in all the religious organizations under review indicated that there was not a single member who had not been impacted by HIV - either through bereavement of a family member, a friend, or a workmate. The ratio of men and women in the City Church is almost one to one.

The City Church, which is a commuting one, can boast of a reasonable number of highly qualified professionals who are holders of four-year college degrees. This is also reflected in the level of tithing and participation in various ministries. Consequently, intergenerational tensions - though not highly pronounced - often erupt around issues of gender, lifestyle and sexuality bordering on sex education. Some of these issues are emotionally charged and take on great significance as symbolic markers. For obvious reasons this particular church has comparatively high-income stratification, a factor that

has already been mentioned above.¹⁸

The Uniting Presbyterian Church of Mabvuko and Uniting Presbyterian Church at St. Mary are located in high-density suburbs - with the majority of their constituents falling in the low-income bracket. The combined memberships of these two churches total two hundred fifty (250) active members who attend the forenoon service each Sunday. As struggling churches, the effects of HIV/AIDS have worsened their situation.

The writer maintained a dynamic relationship with these churches prior to entering seminary. From providing funds for the payment of salaries to the payment of monies for living quarters, this writer assisted these churches. Anecdotal evidence from the church leadership indicated that the salaries of the pastors would remain unpaid for months. This relationship invited comments from the congregants who felt that the writer should forego entering seminary and continue to stabilize the financial conditions at the churches.

A sad commentary surrounding these churches exists in the fact that at least 90 percent of the congregants are not employed on regular jobs. Those who are employed work as domestics. However, daily bus fare to travel to these jobs presents challenges for these persons for reasons already alluded to in the foregoing paragraphs.

A French-speaking diplomat describes the Vapostori sect as *Les enfant des Dieux sans maison*, literally meaning children of God without a house. Founded by Johane Maranke in 1932, worship is conducted in open-air spaces in and around the city. Members of the larger community refer to this sect as *kunamata pasango*, or worshipers in the bush.

¹⁸Jackson W. Carroll and Wade Clark, *Bridging Divided Worlds: Generational Cultures in Congregations* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass, 2002), 11.

The *Vapostori* set themselves apart from their neighbors in many ways. They don uniforms for Sabbath service. The members refrain from drinking alcohol, smoking and eating porcine foodstuff. They also choose not to use medicines - neither traditional nor European. Additionally, the *Vapostori* are restricted from participating in the rituals of the traditional Shona religion. When *mupostori* dies, church members assume full responsibility for the burial. All rites associated with the traditional veneration of spirit elders are omitted. The members bury the corpse in proximity to the graves of other *Vapostori*.¹⁹

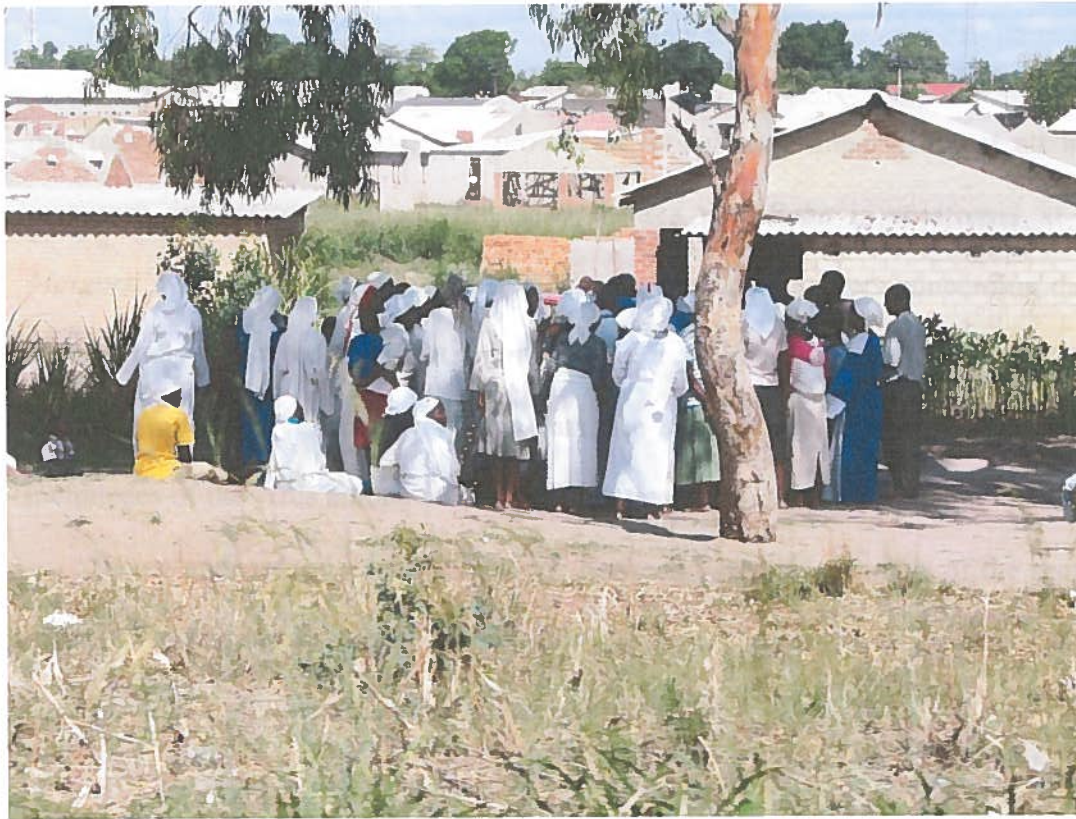
The females veil their heads with red ribbons. The attire of the men is as follows: white heavily embroidered tunics, long wooden staffs, shaved heads and long beards. The worshippers remove their shoes during the service giving reverence to the ground as holy.²⁰

The uniqueness of this sect resonates from the fact that they subscribe to polygamous unions. Exogamous marriages are not allowed, only those from within the sect. Premarital sex is disallowed. The ritual for courtship leading to marriage consists of the young man discussing the matter with his father's sister.

Tete, (the father's sister) investigates the young woman's background and the negotiations for the *roora* (the bride's price) are set in motion. At the completion of the endeavor, contractual arrangements are made. *Baba*, the father of the groom, takes the newly wedded wife to live with him in the same house with the other wives.

¹⁹Michael Bourdillon, *The Shona Peoples: An Ethnography of the Contemporary Shona with Special Reference to their Religion* (Gweru, Zimbabwe: Mambo Press, 1998) 300.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 350.



On Saturday afternoons members of the Vapostori Apostolic Sect wear their uniforms for the Sabbath service. For girls and women this usually is a white veiled to the head with a red ribbon.

The position of *Maiguru*. (matriarch of the family or the first wife in a polygamous marriage) is a powerful one. She provides oversight and supervision of all household resources and responsibilities. She also insures that *Baba* is comforted at bedtime. *Maiguru's* krall is the first point of call for resolution of matters concerning the family. *Baba* is only consulted when determined by the matriarch.²¹

With no means of verification of this data, the author simply presents it as proof of the incidences of the virus among a sect with less than one hundred members.

There appears to be little difference between what the members of the sect do with regard to their faith in relation to their daily chores. The credo that governs their lives is *God supreme and love your neighbor as yourself*.²²

The challenge that confronted the writer was the misconception of the idea surrounding polygamy and its impact on HIV/AIDS. Owing to the communal nature of living with members of the same sect, the writer surmised that the tendency for promiscuity was reduced to the lowest minimum.

Jacob Olupona seems to corroborate the writer's opinion when he states,

"Africans are more comfortable with participation and developing relationships in religious practices than in mere mental digestion of scriptural and catechetical knowledge and logical arguments." He further argues the rationale for why indigenous churches often patterned after the African traditional worldview have been more successful than western churches in gaining converts in Africa.²³ Gerhadus Cornelius Oosthuizen notes

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid.

²³Jacob Olupona, *African Traditional Religions in Contemporary Society* (St. Paul, Minnesota: Paragon House, 1991) 4.

that African traditional religion essentially promotes strong sense of community and that is oriented towards human beings rather than things.”²⁴

Rationale

The church is obligated to engage in and practice ministry to all persons. The church is ministry and its reason for existence is service to the world. Ministry places Christ at the center of the life of the congregation. Understanding and realizing itself as a new creation in Christ, the congregation becomes inheritors of God’s promise for protection and salvation irrespective of the sufferings it endures. It also means that the behavioral patterns of the congregation in their day-to-day relational encounters are discernible, Christ-like and unambiguously proclaimed to be true, easy-to-understand and immortal.

The church has been given a moment of grace and opportunity to rethink its mission and to transform its structures in order to become a place of redemption where, hope and healing flourish. The Christian vocation to build community becomes a clarion call that resounds with those who are infected with the AIDS virus.

According to Karl Barth, “The Christian community is not sent into the world haphazardly or at random, but with very definite tasks. Because Jesus is the Kingdom of God which with its comfort and healing, Christians are required to approach and soothe the suffering from millions of wounds and put an end to misery.”²⁵

The writer subscribes to the Lukan understanding of mission that entails commitment, conviction and moral responsibilities.²⁶ The project was situated in the

²⁴Ibid., 57.

²⁵*Karl Barth Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Reconciliation*, ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance (New York: T. and T. Clark International, 200), 796.

²⁶Luke 4:18-21 (King James Version).

church because the Lordship of Christ cannot be exercised in a vacuum, but in concrete historical circumstances of faith communities that live under the direction of the Holy Spirit. The outward orientation of the church in the larger community is to be actively engaged in mission to those still outside the penumbra of the Gospel. The decisive moment has arrived! Africa in general and Zimbabwe in particular have been plunged into a crisis that is shaking the very foundations upon which they were established.²⁷

Closely linked to the ministry context in its various ramifications are the cultural dynamics and beliefs that largely determine how people in the ministry setting understand and interpret events. Cognitive counseling approaches are built on the premise that emotional and behavioral disturbances are learned from one's culture and environment. Some of these are inculcations of irrational beliefs by significant persons in the community. The psychologist Ellis contends that, "We have the power to control our destiny by disputing our irrational beliefs. It involves avoiding destructive self-talk and learning constructive self-talk."²⁸

Surveys carried out in the ministry setting indicated that people living with the virus had a lot of negative self-talk based on traditional beliefs and irrational thought patterns. The self-talk must be countered in the faith traditions if the matter of living with the virus is to become a reality. It has been suggested that some church leaders all too often use biblical texts to justify the stance that AIDS is a punishment from God and pronounce that a person has died of AIDS because of "promiscuous behavior." More

²⁷David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2005), 201.

²⁸L. E. Patterson and E. R. Welfel, *The Counseling, 5th Edition* (London, UK: Brooks Cole, 2000), 275.

frightening is the reality that, in some churches, leaders declare, "We do not have AIDS in our church."

The author has been involved in praxis from within and without the church, prior to responding to the call to enter into seminary. He provided succor to many widows and orphans who had been impacted by HIV/AIDS, as well as to others in the community who were living with the disease. The writer understood the need to design the project as a thankful expression of commitment to God through obedience. As proclamation, the writer reflected theologically, tracing and amplifying God's spirit, then interpreting the same in sign, action and speech.

As a child, this writer witnessed his mother's journey as a single parent in her efforts to rear six children without the benefit of assistance. She released all of the good things in her life for the sake of her children. This writer believes that these two motifs - praxis and experiential wisdom - informed the project and created synergy.

Thus, the writer's home front served as the crucible in which his faith in the Triune God was borne and crystallized. The essence and relevance of this concept aided his ability to translate this dual-pronged synergy into reality with this project. The writer is persuaded that the present moment is a time that is ripe with possibilities for the faith communities as they seek to address the diverse peripheral issues surrounding HIV/AIDS. The writer acquired the requisite tools for the execution of the project from the perspective of the risen Christ, who is the gift to the world.

Summary of Findings

After spending considerable time in observation of the pastors in the performance of their daily routines, the writer surmises that these church leaders are inundated by their

ministry of care to those who are suffering from the virus. What these leaders confront on an everyday basis is often grotesque and bizarre. Married couples infected with the disease languish in the same hospital ward, emaciated with sunken cheeks, sores and gaping wounds. On the same day, the church leaders administer last unction and conduct funeral services for their members who had succumbed to the disease. Oftentimes these funeral services number in the multiple digits on a daily basis.

The question that looms large on this faith horizon is who needs consoling the most, the pastor, the bereaved family or all of the above? The virus and the consequences of it gobble up substantial church resources as well as that of the community.

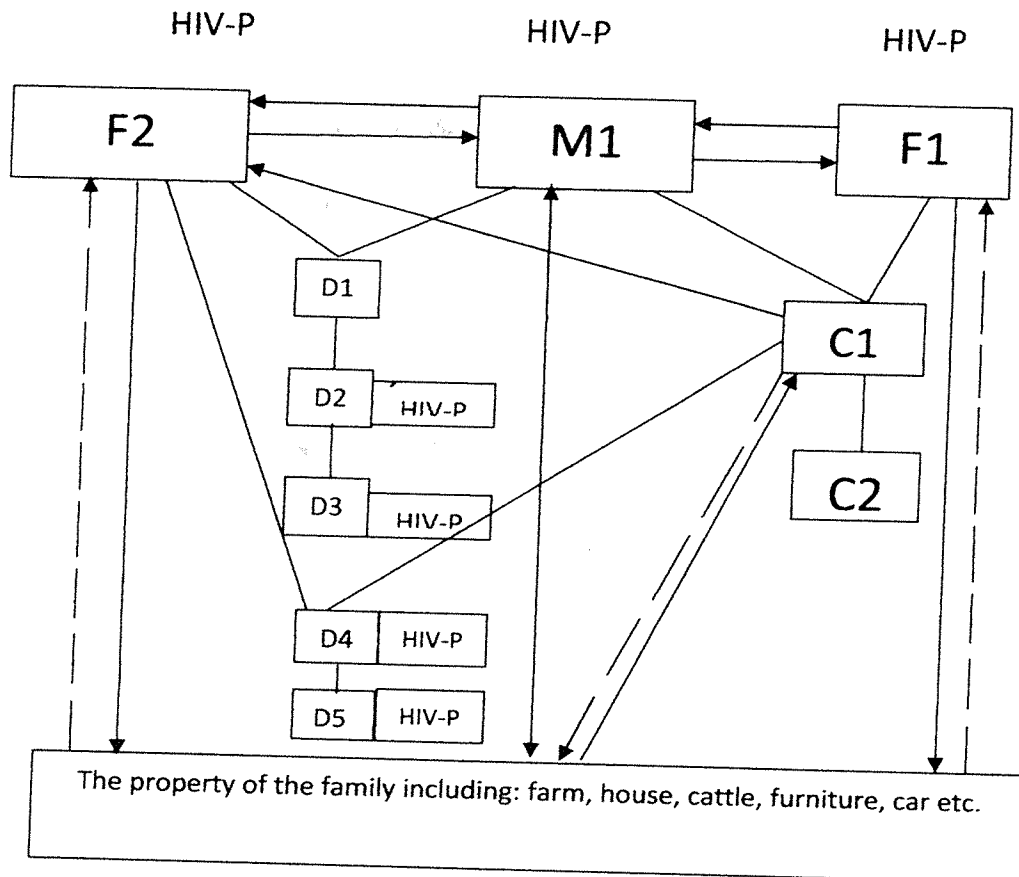
Walter Rauschenbusch succinctly posed the issue thusly, "The church is to be the incarnation of the Christ-spirit on earth, the organized conscience of Christianity. It should be swiftest to awaken to every undeserved suffering, bravest to speak against every wrong and strongest to rally the moral forces of the community against everything that threatens the better life among men (sic)."²⁹

This is a profound statement. However, the loud and querulous moaning from the pews remains, "What is God saying or doing in these circumstances?" The writer opines that God's position is explicit and unequivocally clear as stipulated in Psalm 91:7-12 and John 15:7, 8. Additionally the theology of the church is found in the way the church reads the passion story.³⁰ Viewed as more than a mere theological idea, God's anguished solidarity with the poor and marginalized is evidenced in the cross of Jesus. Jesus identifies with the sick and this includes those suffering from HIV/AIDS.

²⁹*Readings in Christian Thought*, ed. Hugh Kerr (Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1990), 259.

³⁰James H. Cone, Gayraud S. Wilmore, *Black Theology: A Documentary History Volume II* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1994), 183.

Inheritance Under The Customary Process in a Polygamous Marriage



Diagram

M1= Madzibaba (husband/patriarch)

F1= Maiguru (first wife)

F2= Mainini (second wife)

C1= First male born child of first wife

C2= Second child of first wife

D1-D3= Children of second wife

D4-D5= Children of 2nd wife with stepson(C1) who inherited step mother after madzibaba's death

CHAPTER II

THEORIES THAT INFORM THE MINISTRY ISSUE

In attempting to construct a full response to the matter of widows and orphans who have been left as survivors in the HIV/AIDS crisis in the suburban cities of Zimbabwe, the researcher needed to ascertain the theories that affected the ministry project. After careful consideration, it was determined that three theories needed to be addressed in the ministry project: 1) the Biblical, 2) the historical and 3) the experiential. The writer will discuss three theoretical frameworks that served to inform his efforts in devising a ministry project that addressed the ministry issue.

The biblical discussion will present texts from the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament that relate to the care and nurture of widows and orphans. The historical perspective will reflect on the care of widows and orphans under the inheritance system as practiced in the African heritage. Finally, the theological viewpoint will center on Christological representations on the plight of widows and orphans.

Biblical

The writer chose to concentrate on two primary readings to frame the Biblical discourse on the ministry issue - Numbers 27:1-7 from the Hebrew Bible and James 1:27 from the New Testament. A critical analysis of each text required the writer to peruse other scriptural readings that support the primary text. Therefore, the writer will discuss each primary text in a manner that will shape and frame the ministry issue.

According to the New Testament reading, James (the purported author of the text) intimates that "God our father accepts as pure and faultless to look after orphans and widows in distress." In this epistle that is addressed to believers who reside in Diaspora,

the Biblical author proceeds to provide practical advice to the Christians. Moving from discussions that center on themes of anger, quarreling, favoritism, boasting, patience and prayer, James indicates that community among the believers should rest upon a different paradigm than what was previously followed.

From a careful reading of the text in James, it becomes clear that the challenge faced by the Grecian widows in Acts 6:1-7 is uppermost in the mind of the writer. It is in the Acts text that the Grecian widows were being neglected in the distribution of food. Consequently, seven deacons, led by Stephen, were appointed to take care of the problem. Several factors in this text serve to correlate to the ministry issue: 1) the failure of the disciples to practice inclusion as taught by Jesus; 2) the slightly suggestible issue of gender in the text and 3) challenges of ethnicity that lurk beneath the surface.

Hebraic Jews formed the nucleus of the group who followed Jesus. This writer opines that these Hebraic Jewish followers accepted the call of Jesus to become part of a new community, yet they failed to jettison their 'Jewish-ness.' Jesus maintained a connection with his Jewish heritage. Evidence of this is found in the fact that Jesus wore ritual garments prescribed for the men that reminded them of the commandments they were to observe. Jesus worshiped in the Temple at Jerusalem and attended the synagogue on the Sabbath.¹ Arguably, Jesus did not allow his heritage or culture to prevent him from preaching and practicing the Good News of the inclusion of all people.

Many texts in the Hebrew Bible highlight the plight of women as an existence that bordered on the tenuous. Women in the times preceding the first advent of Jesus lived in the world in the shadows. They were seen but not heard. This writer surmises that women

¹Luke 6:6 (New Revised Standard Version).

were victims who were not even entitled to reparations or compensation for wrongs that were heaped upon them. One of the challenges that the writer discovered is the need to educate Zimbabwe women on their rights and to encourage them to seek redress when their rights have been infringed.

The text of Numbers 27:1-11 focuses attention on the matter of inheritance concerning women. There are points of commonalities in this text that resonate with the writer's ministry issue. In this pericope, Zelophehad is presented as a man who through his genealogy and integrity merited an allotment of land in the Promised Land. However, he died before Moses could parcel the land. The connection to the writer's ministry issue is made even more poignant by the fact that the five daughters of Zelophehad became his survivors, since there were no male heirs. Inferentially, a wife is nonexistent, thus ruling out the invocation of levirate marriage with its consequential preservation of Zelophehad's name among the tradition. It is in this background that the daughters of Zelophehad - Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah and Tirzah - press legal proceedings that would accord them their father's allotment of land.

Owing to the fact that their case is a precedent, Moses immediately brought their case to Yahweh. Yahweh affirmed the daughters by declaring that they were right. Because of this ruling, the women received an allotment of and among the men in their line. Interestingly, Yahweh chose to modify the existing laws that determined the allotment of land - a law that Yahweh promulgated. Yahweh not only modified the law, but Yahweh declared that women were right in their demand. Thus through this verbal pronouncement of exoneration, Yahweh preserved the women from possible sanctions of being labeled as insurrectionists.

There is global concern for the violation of human rights. Specific issues are to be addressed in the African context rather than outlining general recommendations. Issues relating to women's rights of inheritance definitely constitute an important aspect of this. It was noted earlier that the staunch patriarchal family of ancient Israel ultimately granted the rights of inheritance to women after the daughters of Zelophehad had lamented their unprecedented petition. The challenge is to conscientize Zimbabwe women, especially widows, on their rights and to encourage them to seek redress whenever those rights are infringed upon.

Historical

A patrilineal construct governs the system that applies to the rights of inheritance in the situation where the male dies without having provided for his wife and children. This system becomes even more burdensome for the surviving widow and orphans when the death of the male is attributed to complications from HIV/AIDS. If a sound approach to caring for widows and orphans in this instance is to be developed, a glimpse into the intestate laws of Zimbabwe becomes necessary.

The intestate succession strictly follows the principle of primogeniture, which directly favors the male heir. This means that the property of the deceased father devolves to his first-born son and subsequently to the other sons. According to R. de Vaux if the deceased father had no male heirs, his estate passes to his brother(s). This pattern of succession is followed even if a daughter is the only surviving heir. By virtue of their gender, daughters are excluded from the intestate inheritance system in Zimbabwe.² (See diagram on page 48.)

²R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions* (London, UK: Longman and Todd, 1991), 166.

Such exclusion places great hardship upon daughters, widows and orphans. As victims of a patrilineal system that regards maleness, incessant disputes and conflicts result after the death of the father. The continuous exclusion of women from inheritance contributes to family destabilization, which will ultimately gravely impact the village or community.

Before gaining her independence from the minority Rhodesian settler regime in 1980, Zimbabwe allowed women to acquire property. However, they were not able to register the property in their names. The property was registered in the name of a male relative. The legislature rectified this situation at a later date. Yet residual issues remain where the male kin of the women refuse returning the property to the women, the rightful owners.³

Closely aligned to the above is the issue of *kugara nhaka*. When the widow refuses to comply with demands by her father-in-law and/or surviving brothers of her late husband, she stands to lose the property she received from her husband's estate. This situation places the widow and her children in jeopardy.⁴

The insult becomes more injurious when the circumstances indicate that the widow contracted HIV/AIDS from the deceased husband. In these situations, the widow is forced to choose which of the late husband's brothers she should marry if she is to have resources to cover her life and that of her children. This practice is more prevalent among the *povo*, a local parlance-describing people in the lower ranks of the societal ladder, although middle class families are often affected by this practice. A parallel to this

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

phenomenon can be found in one of the narratives as revealed in Genesis 38:8. Judah insists that his middle son engage in intimate relations with Tamar, his deceased brother's wife, in order to produce offspring that will bear the name of the deceased. Seminary professor Harold Bennett opines that the text fails to tell whether the young man performing the duty wins the choice of the widow.⁵

Anecdotal evidence shows the pathos that widows suffer in these situations. A widow in the ministry setting said, "I waited until I fell in love and married the man of my dreams. One year later he contracted pneumonia and within twelve months later the diagnosis of HIV/AIDS became apparent. He died when our daughter was three years old. Why is God punishing me? I did not deserve this!" Feeling overwhelmed by life and death, this widow exemplifies the predominant distress among the widows and orphans in the ministry setting.

For the widow in Zimbabwe, the situation is aggravated by the fact that she not only loses a husband who was the source of her livelihood, but she loses the presence of a male who ordinarily provided her access to the public sphere.⁶ The widow in Zimbabwe experiences the same reactions to death of loved ones as described by Elizabeth K. Ross in her book on death and dying - shock, denial, anger and bitterness.⁷

The aftermath of the life of orphans and widows fits this paradigm with a few notable exceptions. There are hundreds of orphans in the ministry setting who have lost both parents to HIV/AIDS. The writer understands the need to explore the meaning and

⁵Harold Bennett, *Injustice Made Legal: Deuteronomic Law and the Plight of Widows, Strangers and Orphans in Ancient Israel* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing, 2002), 33.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Elizabeth K. Ross, *On Death and Dying* (London, UK: Tavistock Publications, Limited, 1969), 34-121.

sociological ramifications of the term 'orphan'. What are the explicit and implied concepts that reside in the meaning of this term?

H. Ringgren, renowned theologian surveyed ancient Egyptian, Mesopotamian, Ugaritic and Phoenician texts to find occurrences of the terms that define orphan from their sociological and etymological points of contact. Ringgren states that this term appears forty-two (42) times in the Hebrew Bible. Furthermore, he intimates that the text of Lamentations 5:3 provides a key piece of evidence for understanding the concept of orphans. He concludes that the term *yatom* depicts a minor who is fatherless.⁸ J. Renkena believes that the term *yatom* refers to a child who is bereft of her/his mother or father.⁹ From the perspective of the writer's ministry setting, he surmised that both of these concepts apply to a determination of an approach to the ministry issue. The plight and number of orphans in the interfaith communities in Zimbabwe continues to multiply.

AIDS is now a household word for most people. "At least two thirds of those infected and occupy areas in Sub-Saharan Africa. Life expectancy has declined significantly in Botswana, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Namibia, South Africa, Kenya and Cote d'Ivoire. The highest rate of HIV-positive persons is in Botswana, where it is estimated that two thirds of 15 year old males and females will die prematurely."¹⁰

African cultural practices such as *lobola* or *roora* (bride price) contribute to women's cultural vulnerability to HIV/AIDS. Conversations with widows and other women in the community indicate that their husbands often treat them as if they are "owned" because the men paid *roora* in order to marry. This proprietary treatment

⁸Harold Bennett *Injustice Made Legal*), 56.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰Tony Barnett and Alan Whiteside, *AIDS in the Twenty-First Century: Disease and Globalization* (Houndsville, UK: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002), 22.

extends to the couple's sexual relationship, with the husband expecting sex on demand. Requesting the use of condom often evokes anger and suspicion, so all too often women feel unable to insist on its use during intercourse. This practice significantly increases the risk to the woman of contracting HIV.

Because of their subordinate cultural status, it is accepted that women's role is to please men sexually, and they have little say over the kinds of sexual practices in which they engage. The writer understands this as oppression of women and infringement of their rights. There is need for the church to become a place of redemption, hope, and healing, positive Christian teaching on sexuality. Women need to find in the church a safe space to unburden the load they carry as subordinate partners in marriage relationships. Men and women may both contract the virus, but the patriarchal situation makes the former more vulnerable and helpless. This is what provided the impetus for this kind of ministry.

Theological

The God-question that loomed large in the writer's ministry setting was, "What is God saying about the widows and orphans who are survivor-victims of HIV/AIDS?" In efforts to remain focused on the precise issue, the writer found Exodus 22:22-24 as a text that could be used to address the God-question. "Do not take advantage of a widow or an orphan. If you do and they cry out to me, I will certainly hear their cry. My anger will be aroused, and I will kill you with the sword. Your wives will become widows and your children fatherless."

Theological reflection operates in the same fashion as a craft. Like stonemasons or weavers, theologians work and rework raw materials until they have fashioned a

satisfactory end product that is theological understanding. Three processes flow from theological understandings: 1) interpreting the meaning of Christian faith; 2) correlating those interpretations with other; and 3) assessing the adequacy of the interpretations. The writer engaged all three of these processes in addressing the theological framework that bridges the ministry issue with the ministry context.¹¹

Christocentric theology served to define the theological underpinnings of the ministry issue. The New Testament hinges on the ultimate Christian revelation of Yahweh in and through the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus clearly reveals the conscious intent that God chose to manifest God's being among specific oppressed strata in the real world, to be born on the margins of society, in a manger amid cow dung, dirt and straw.¹²

Further evidence of Jesus alignment with the marginalized persons of society resides in the fact that Jesus was crucified between two thieves. Buried in a borrowed tomb, Jesus continued his quest of alignment with the least in society. James Cone succinctly reasons that, "When the poor of the Third World and North America read the passion story, they do not view it as a theological idea but as God's anguished solidarity with the victimized of the world. The cross of Jesus is God's election of the poor, taking their pain and suffering upon him." The writer theologizes that Jesus displays the same love for the widows and orphans of Zimbabwe.

For the writer, the application of this theology demonstrates the radicalism and inclusiveness of the Good News preached and lived out by Jesus. Thus the thrust of the message for the widows and orphans in the ministry setting seeks blessings that counter

¹¹Howard W. Stone and James O. Duke, *How To Think Theologically* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2006), 27.

¹²Dwight N. Hopkins, "Black Theology and a Second Generation: New Scholarship and New Challenges," in *Black Theology: A Documentary History* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), 391.

the practices of the present tradition that deny the resources from the estates of the deceased.

God calls the church to become and to be the church of Jesus Christ who honors the mission of love to widows and orphans. "Mission is the result of God's initiative rooted in God's purposes to restore and heal creation."¹³ Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons, initiated this theological precept when he defined mission as God's creative and redemptive purposes where Christ is the renewer (sic) of humanity.¹⁴

As the writer pondered the ministry issue, he learned to appreciate the need for the development of a discerning spirit that would serve to deepen his capacity to concentrate on individual needs without diluting the basis of the theme, origin, content and the unity of the witness. He found corroboration for his thoughts in the works of Karl Barth. "To proclaim the Gospel means to utter and cause to be heard in the world with no less distinctness than many other things and with incomparably great peace.....the existence of the living Jesus Christ yesterday, today and tomorrow as the content of the Gospel." Furthermore, Karl Barth reiterates the need for specificity and definitiveness in the presentation of the Gospel.

The writer's theology proceeds from a framework of 'embedded theology'. Embedded theology entails all that the writer has learned as a Christian from countless daily encounters with other Christians - formal and informal encounter, planned and unplanned encounters. Decisions made at work, in recreational pursuits, in the family and in society reinforced the writer's embedded theology. However, the writer's seminary experience caused him to adopt a deliberative theological stance. From a

¹³ Ibid., 392.

¹⁴ Hugh T. Kerr, *Reading in Christian Thought* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1990), 29.

process of careful introspection and reflection on embedded theological convictions, he now engages in a more reasoned approach to theology. Thus, the writer began to craft and extract a theology that is more applicable to the interfaith communities that comprised his ministry settings in the townships of Zimbabwe. A careful examination of the churches in Africa in general and Zimbabwe in particular aided the writer in his quest for theological underpinnings that represented the ministry issues in his project.

In the light of economic strangulation, poverty and squalor, and the devastation in the midst of HIV/AIDS pandemic, one question that looms in the minds of people is whether Zimbabwean theology has lost its prophetic significance. A definitive response cannot be offered to this mighty question. Many of theologians and clergy used Christianity as an opportunity to pursue their own agendas for political power in the same manner as Constantine.¹⁵

Christianity has always been seen as being at odds with the prophetic legacy of Jesus Christ. An argument can be made that Constantine converted to Christianity partly out of a political strategy and imperial exigency. He proceeded to use the cloak of Christianity for his own purposes of maintaining power.¹⁶ The writer raises no objections to any member of the clergy who openly declares her or his political leanings and aspirations at the very inception of their ministry. An old adage of the Ga tribe of Greater Accra, Ghana, renders this meaning better, "If one dances to two different tunes at the same time, they end up with a crooked waist."

The theological task in Zimbabwe has shifted from protest to what can best be

¹⁵Cornell West, *Democracy Matters: Winning the Fight Against Imperialism* (London, UK: Penguin Press, 2004), 18.

¹⁶Ibid.

described as divine and fearless prophetic critique. Homegrown patriotic theologians should begin to enunciate a theology of liberation that connects the real life experiences of the marginalized widows and orphans with the academically learned doctrines. Doing theology in critical solidarity with the government's agenda of national reconstruction and economic development enables the church, as well as Christians in place of public responsibility, to contribute to that task, albeit from perspectives informed by Christian faith and critique.

The task is a dangerous and uphill journey for theologians in Zimbabwe. It must be borne in mind that African leadership detests critique. Speaking truth to power becomes an onerous venture in an environment where to do so might endanger the theologian. It is little wonder that well-meaning African intelligentsia and theologians have extricated themselves from their home countries and entered into self-imposed exile.

The Biblical, the historical and the theological theories directly informed the writer's approach to the ministry of how to utilize the customary processes of inheritance to aid widows and orphans who are affected by the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Zimbabwe. As a continuum culminating in theoretical foundations, these served as rudders that provided direction for crafting the Resurrection Ministry. Once these foundations had been established, the writer engaged a missional theory of theology to formulate the project.

Cultural Dichotomy in Ministry and African Religiosity

"To be charitable is to be deserving of charity. Without difference, dialogue would be moot. If you feel the need to conceal what you believe for fear of difference, then dialogue becomes just a show, and agreement an illusion. Indeed,

agreement by concealment is intolerance by another name, if truth be told.”¹⁷

The Resurrection Ministry project that was introduced by this writer, concerns itself with how to create synergy between Christianity and the traditional beliefs of Zimbabwe as the writer attempts to provide a reasoned and wholistic response to the ministry issue that is representative of religion in general and African religiosity in particular. In an attempt to avoid, the usual pitfalls associated with African contextualization in which context (culture) alone is used to assign value to religious beliefs, the author attempted to craft an approach that embraces the tenets of traditional beliefs of Zimbabwe. Therefore, the writer determined to employ the lenses of culture and African religiosity to reflect upon, analyze, understand and present a possible resolution to the ministry issue. In this manner, the writer presents the traditional beliefs as a viable tool to be utilized in crafting a response to the issue of widows and orphans whose lives have been negatively impacted by HIV/AIDS.

Culture alone should not be the sole determinant of value in one's faith system. The author Lamin Sanneh addresses this issue in his discussion on context:

“Context is not passive, but comes pre-loaded with its own biases, ready to context whatever claims it encounters. Contexts, after all, are constructed strategies. As such, a context-sensitive approach should be responsive without being naïve. Therefore, we should look at religion in its won right.....Thoughts, intentions, and actions together constitute the personal distinction of religion, while institutions, structures and organizations constitute the social and public dimensions.”¹⁸

It is apropos that Sanneh critiqued the use of context in the explanation of religion. From his perspective, one can readily determine that religion is composed of many facets

¹⁷Lamin Sanneh, *Whose Religion is Christianity? The Gospel Beyond the West* (Grand Rapids, Wisconsin: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), 5.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 5.

and strategies. When context is the only tool used to explain religion, one is apt to leave out other pertinent aspects of faith. In order to determine a more reasoned and intentional grasp on questions of faith and religion, it stands to reason that all dimensions and strategies must be carefully weighed and considered. This writer explores other dimensions in this discussion on African religiosity.

African Cosmology

African religiosity places great emphasis on cosmology. African cosmology pertains to the orderliness of nature and the connectivity of all creation. The hand of God touches all people, all events, all things and all circumstances. The Ga-Adangbe tribe of Greater-Accra, Ghana, refers to God as *Awusai atse*, *Mawu Okropon*, a term that identifies God as the Divine Parent of orphans with whom God is intimately acquainted. It is this very cosmological understanding about God that the writer uses to inform the ministry issue surrounding survivors of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Zimbabwe.

A further demonstration of African cosmology resonates with the Akan people. An example of the Akan people's understanding of cosmology might best be explained through an Akan proverb that states, *Obi nkyere akwada Nyame*, which means, "Nobody tells a child who God is because the child is born with the knowledge of God." Thus, it is with this truth that the indigenous people are able to impress upon the colonial missionaries their ingrained awareness of God.

Against this background of African religion, divergences and differences emerge. While the theme of continuity is manifestly central, the way that it is used differs from one group to another group. This writer affirms the argument for radical continuity that Bolaji Idowu makes in his seminal treatise. Idowu reasons that the church in Africa, as a

result of its peculiar historical connection with Western cultural dominance, was failing to develop its own theology. In order to remedy this 'predicament of dependence', Idowu presented the following opinion:

"The African church needed to build its bridges to the revelation given to Africans in their pre-Christian and pre-missionary religious traditions in the past. Ostensibly intended to connect the old and the new in the African religious experience, this argument, based on the fundamental postulate of the 'foreignness' (sic) of Christianity, tended to lead toward a minimalist reading of the newness of Christianity in Africa at the specific level of religious apprehension. Accordingly, African Christian experience emerged as not much more than a refinement of the experience of the 'old' religion and the vindication and affirmation of African selfhood, which at the start, had been conceived as the task of the church, later came to be entrusted to the revitalization of the 'old' religions, with their God-given-heritage of indigenous spiritual and cultural treasures."¹⁹

Gabriel Setiloane, Samuel Kibicho and Christian Gabo echo the sentiments presented by Idowu. The indigenous people of Africa must retain their distinct theological framework that is original to them, that is a religious construct that is deliberately and uniquely African. However, problems arise when culture is used to place a hegemonic lock on the belief system of others. Culture is dynamic and therefore the need for a viable intercourse that engenders the desired growth and development is necessary.

African Culture

Culture permeates every facet of Zimbabwean society from cradle to the grave. A primary cultural belief is inherent in the African marriage customs. For example, a number of cultural norms are observed prior to the formulation of the marital contract between a young woman and a young man. Marriage in the Shona culture is contracted not between a man and a woman, the extended families of the two; that is, between clans that constitute a village complete with their intricate and complex totemic systems.

¹⁹*The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. David Ford (United Kingdom: Blackwell Publishing, 2002), 431.

From the man's side, a *munyayi*, a close and respected friend of the family or the go-between, seeks to ascertain all the worthy information about the background of the family of the young girl. The young girl contracts with a spokesperson from her family who makes the same inquiries about the background of the family of the prospective groom. The spokespersons request specific information concerning the family health history, ethical matters, tribal involvements in wars and most importantly the totem. Health questions revolve around whether there is a history of certain diseases such as leprosy, blindness or tuberculosis. For the purposes of the writer's stance on the ministry issue, it should be noted that the Shona people do not encourage marriage between persons of identical or of the same totem. Any endemic diseases or deleterious gene characteristics might be transmitted between allied totemic conditions.

The ethical matters include questions that delve into the criminal and psychopathic illnesses of the family. Whether the family includes a convicted felon or whether *magamba*, (warriors), in the family have fought in tribal wars go to the question of the ownership of cattle by the family and importance of the totem. In the course of the fact-finding expedition and negotiations, elders from either side could decide to discontinue the process.

Should a cessation occur, everything comes to a complete termination, without any need to offer justifications for such action on the part of either side. It is this element that reiterates and places an imprimatur on the young woman and the young man about the edict as proscribed in verse 1 of Exodus, chapter 20.²⁰ However, upon the successful completion of the forensic inquiry by the *munyayi* from the families, the *sahwira*

²⁰Exodus 20:1 – "Honor your father and mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you." (NIV).

negotiates the *roora*, the bride price with the aid of the *vamunyayi* (plural for the word), and the marital process continues forward to consummation.

Children are born into a village, not just the family. This implies that the welfare, nurture and care for children become the responsibility of the entire village. Children adhere to a long-standing system of respect for elder persons - the *vanababa* or *vanasekuru* (senior males) and the *amai* or *ambuya* (senior female) - as an aspect of veneration. The joy of the family becomes the joy of all in the village. Conversely the family who suffers loss through death shares the bereavement process with the village. Thus, African religiosity maintains a connection with psalmic refrain contained in Psalm 133, verse 1, "How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity."²¹ This truth is poignantly revealed in the scene when a youngster reaches the age when she or he embarks on an international journey in order to further education. The young person departs wearing the badge of honor as an ambassador for the entire village.

Despite the above-stated references to harmony within the Shona culture, the writer found that several challenges within the Shona sociological sphere needed to be raised if he were to present a cogent response to the ministry issue. Notable among these challenges is the inheritance system known as *kugara nhaka*. In the Shona culture, if the husband dies, the eldest male child inherits all of the property, thus creating an issue of great proportions for the surviving widow. The Shona custom attempts to deal with this issue by obliging the next-of-kin, who may be the younger brother of the deceased, to marry the widow. However, in light of spread of HIV/AIDS, the author noted the urgent need for review and reconsideration of this particular cultural matter if a relevant

²¹Psalm 133:1 - "How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity!" (NRSV).

response was to be developed regarding the ministry issue.

Many familiar routines are in jeopardy. A threat looms in some of the more specious areas of community life. One can hardly fault the people for desiring to hold on and practice long-held traditions. These traditions contribute to the continuation and perpetuation of kinship and community among the people.

The aspects of togetherness and community became hallmark identifiers for the people. In order to continue the spirit and practice of oneness, the people often resorted to activities that fostered community. The researcher had the opportunity to reside in other countries on the North American continent. Although, he evidenced community in other cultures, it was not as practiced in Zimbabwe.

Undoubtedly other cultures permeate their lives with activities that measure up to their sense of community. However, within the context of HIV/AIDS and its effect upon the people in this study, the researcher noted how some of these activities might lead to the possible spread of the virus.

Consistent with the reasoned research process that the writer employed in the project, he was careful to observe and analyze some behaviors and activities that fit the parameters of the perpetuation of HIV/AIDS among the people. The writer takes particular pain in stating that his observations should not be seen as condemnatory against traditions that have provided substance to the people of Africa.

However, the researcher would be remiss if he failed to mention that the risk of the spread of HIV/AIDS has become prevalent and prominent in some of the communal



Beer is consumed in a way that engenders unity and conviviality. This harmless recreational activity is under threat.

pastime activities of Zimbabweans. Being warm and friendly people, Zimbabweans behave in convivial ways towards each other. At the end of a long week of working, people congregate in groups around gallon-sized containers of beer. Sipping and passing containers around for all to drink, present health issues. Under these circumstances, it is difficult to determine who is infected with the HIV/AIDS virus indicators of shingles (herpes sorster), with the incumbent bleeding gums or blister.

The ethos of friendliness that pervades Zimbabwe is one that engenders community. Sadly, this context of community is being eroded by formerly benign activities. It is this spirit of community that has served to maintain linkage among the people of Zimbabwe.

It is also this openness of spirit that provides the link towards retaining African culture. However, the writer must confess a challenging dilemma as concerns activities that seem to promote the spread of the HIV/AIDS virus. One can easily debate the rationale for keeping traditions of community and culture intact. Yet one must always be conscious of eliminating the spread of this dread disease among the populace.

Perhaps, ways exist that would allow for the perpetuation of culture and community and that would give the people less dangerous past time activities. It is the hope of the writer that such resolutions can be found.

In the presentation of culture, community and context, the writer acts in a responsible manner in raising crucial questions that impact the ministry project. However, he is all too aware of the fact that ready answers are not always available to these questions.

Summary

The writer opines that the above-mentioned challenges offer the interfaith communities the opportunities to revisit and review their cultural practices in response to the challenges in the ministry setting. The results of the project are envisioned as a springboard mechanism that the diverse faith communities can employ in rediscovering the mandate of the Biblical witness to proclaim liberation and favor to the poor, the disabled, the incarcerated and the oppressed. In this way, the congregations and religious

group reinforce their traditional understanding of the inseparability of personal salvation from social justice.

The project is not an end in itself. The writer hopes that it will become a useful resource for researchers, pastors, clinicians and community workers who desire to have access to efficacious techniques for their work in the intervention/prevention of HIV/AIDS among the people of Zimbabwe.

Summarily, the writer agrees with the discourse of Gregory of Nazianzus, who declared those persons who claimed to have mastered God by the powers of human reason as heretics. The best theologian, according to Gregory of Nazianzus, is not the one who can give a complete logical account on the subject, but who assembles more of truth's image and shadow.²²

The writer suggests the need to take the best of the scientific realm, the philosophical discourses, the theological postulations and the social analyses as critical tools to be employed in re-thinking and in formulating responses to the plight of the widows and orphans in the interfaith communities in the suburban areas of Zimbabwe. Culture alone should not become a stumbling block or hurdle in the path of faith. Karl Barth enunciates this truth in the following statements:

“Those united in the community are all human individuals and live their own lives with their own particular natures, capabilities, weaknesses, inclinations, aversions, needs and aspirations. This is inevitable. It need not stand in the way of their individual calling and endowment in connection with the commitment to service to the community. The Holy Spirit does not enforce a flat uniformity. Hence the Christian community, quite apart from the natural individuality of its members and the consequent dangers, cannot be a barracks, nor can their activity be the execution of a well-drilled maneuver. Their divine calling and endowment are as

²²David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005), 353.

such manifold. They are always new, challenging and different.”²³

Irrespective of one's cultural and religious leanings, widows and orphans who are left to contend with the ravages of HIV/AIDS are encouraged to avoid destructive self-talk. Positive affirmations serve to insure improved behavior and self-esteem. The interfaith communities are advised to seek familial relationships with those who have been left behind by the virus. Assistance in how to process grief and mourning before attempting to move forward would prove to be beneficial. Pastoral care persons are strongly encouraged to respond with tenderness, warmth and solidarity towards the 'least of these,' where the community has been inundated by the dilemma of death and dying.

The need for a message of hope to be proclaimed to the widows and orphans, who have been marginalized by the circumstances of death, remains constant in the mind of the writer. God has not set the virus as punishment for sins that have been committed. The Gospel of Jesus Christ exemplifies a predisposition towards those whom society labels as victims. The inclusive approach to the ministry issue as promulgated by the writer recognizes how unconditional love leads to radical transformation and hope. Leaders in the 21st century interfaith communities are invited to assist persons who have been left to live with and deal with the ravages left from the HIV/AIDS pandemic in ways that encourage self-esteem and a future with hope.

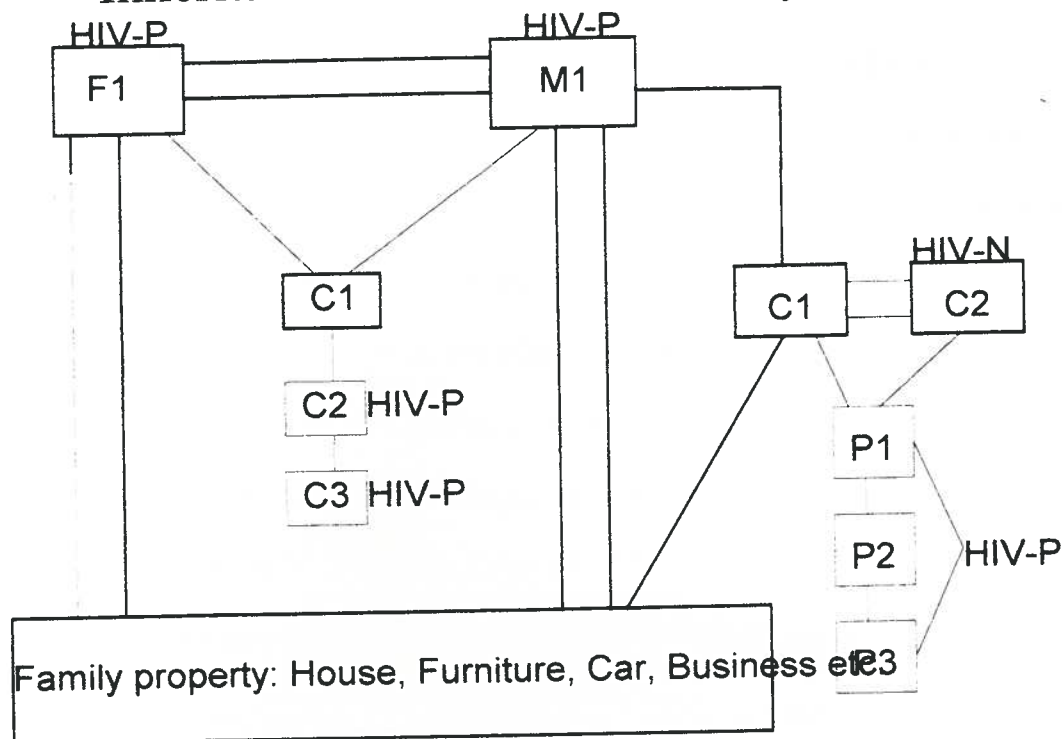
A harsh economic system that precludes the inclusion of widows and orphans as recipients of financial assistance fails to recognize the essence of Christian love. Love seeks the incarnational reality of Jesus in the lives of widows and orphans in the Zimbabwean communities. J. Deotis Roberts echoes some profound sentiments on love

²³ *Karl Barth and Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Reconciliation, Volume IV 3.2*, eds. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrence (New York: T and T Clark International, 2004), 855.

in his treatise on Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Martin L. King Jr., when he intones, "In a spiritual community, agape abounds. In the community of the spirit, one loves the other for Christ's sake. The love that leads one to serve other has its source in Jesus Christ and his message of Good News. Spiritual love is from above. It is from God through Jesus Christ."²⁴

²⁴J. Deotis Roberts, *Bonhoeffer and King: Speaking Truth to Power* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 2005), 50.

Inheritance under the Customary Process



Diagram

F1= Wife

M1= Husband

C1-C3= Children of couple

M2= Brother of husband

D1= Sister-in-law of husband

P1-P3= Children of brother of husband

CHAPTER III

REVIEW, ANALYSIS AND SYNTHESIS OF LITERATURE

This chapter identifies the theoretical as well as the practical literature relative to intervention and assistance to widows and orphans impacted by HIV/AIDS. Focusing on inheritance under the customary processes in the interfaith communities of Harare, Mabvuko, Mbare, and Chitungwiza suburbs of Zimbabwe, the writer attempts to show how the paucity and lack of assistance to the widows and orphans impacted by HIV/AIDS has contributed to their marginalization in the designated communities of faith as identified above.

A number of books have been written on the subject matter of inheritance in general. However, only a handful addresses the area of inheritance under the customary and traditional processes. For the purposes of clarity, elucidation, and relevance, this writer identified the following indigenous writers who authored concerning inheritance in Zimbabwe, her laws, customs and practices. Namely, these authors are Kebokile Dengu-Zvogbo, Welshman Ncube and five other co-authors, who worked under the auspices of Women and Law in Southern Africa Research Trust (WLSAT) and Michael Bourdillon.

In providing the background to the subject matter, Dengu-Zvogbo says, among other things that:

“Zimbabwe has a dual system of laws in which customary law operates side by side with general law, particularly in matters of family law. The laws of inheritance in Zimbabwe are subject to this dualism, with in testate African estates largely being governed by customary patterns of inheritance and intestate non-African estates by the Roman and Dutch common law as modified by the Deceased Estates Succession Act. Problems arise in customary succession because of the apparent incompatibility and between modern life styles and expectations and customary or traditional patterns of organizations. It was no secret that at customary law, the widow had no rights to any of the deceased

husband's estate that that vested to his heir, usually his eldest son. In the absence of such an heir, the estate would go to the deceased nearest male of the deceased's male relative who would administer the estate on behalf of the minor heir until he was old enough to do so himself.

It is generally accepted that custom itself demands that the heir or guardian use the property in the estate for the benefit of the dependents of the deceased. Unfortunately, there appeared to be indications in many cases, resulting in great hardship on the widow and the deceased's other dependents. Media reports gave and continue to give the impression that abuses of the system of customary inheritance are many, especially where the estate contains property of considerable value. The practice of dispossessing the widow of the family assets, evicting her from her home and generally harassing her was and is believed to be rampant throughout the country."¹

Research carried out in the area of intestate succession in respect of African estates describes the situation, and in certain instances, the difficulties of attempting to apply "customary law" to persons whose mode of life and circumstances are far removed from that for whom such laws were designed. In a seminal treatise, J. Mpofu revealed that the application of the customary law of inheritance was very uneven throughout the country, with each family unit seeming to be free to interpret and apply customary law as it saw fit. The situation is open to abuse, especially by the male relatives of a deceased person, who, under the guise of custom and dominant male rights, may, or attempt to, take over the estate of the deceased to use for their own purposes. Looting of some estates is reported to take place almost immediately after the man has died, at a time when those closest to the deceased are in no position to safeguard their rights.²

Kebokile Dengu-Dvogbo would further argue saying that, although the media has focused great attention on the notion of making a will to protect the rights of the nuclear

¹Kebokile Dengu-Zvogbo, *et al.*, *Inheritance in Zimbabwe: Law, Customs and Practice* (Harare, Zimbabwe: SAPES Trust, 1994), 6-7.

²J. M. M. Mpofu, "Some Observable Sources of Women's Subordination in Zimbabwe", in *Inheritance in Zimbabwe: Law, Customs and Practice* (Harare, Zimbabwe: SAPES Trust, 1994), 25.

family, especially the widow and orphans, in practice this has not appeared to work. In instances where a will exists, the widow continues to find herself in difficult straits.³ Since a male testator claims membership in a society that holds paternalistic views and attitudes concerning a woman's place and role in society, the possibility of his making a will that reflects such biases cannot be discounted. The will may therefore favor a male child over the widow or over a female child. This suggests that the making of a will may not in itself be of benefit to or enhance women's inheritance rights.

The authors further add that there have been disturbing reports of disgruntled male relatives denouncing wills that provide for the widow as "useless pieces of paper." These persons then proceed to plunder the estate of the deceased property. It requires great strength of will and determination for a widow in such a situation to fight the combined might of her husband's relatives in order to enforce her legal rights and keep the *pfuma* (property) which is rightfully hers. Some widows have reported receiving threats of alienation from the husband's relatives unless they (widows) agreed to share the property with them, or agree to their form of *kugara nhaka* or both.

Under normal circumstances, marriage of the widow to the husband's relative should be based on *kugarwa nhaka*. Mischievous relatives sometimes impose their own candidate on the widow. Customary rules of succession are often misinterpreted to suit the interests of greedy relatives.

This writer's observation on the situation is that individualization occasioned by the cash economy, have fundamentally affected and robbed widows of the traditional support systems that ensured their well-being and that of their children. Many young people leave

³Ibid., 245.

the villages to seek education in the cities. They marry and settle in areas that are often far away from their rural parents and families. Some families are completely urbanized and therefore family members (in the extended sense) reside in various places. Economic and social changes have influenced not just the location and residential composition of the African family but also the relationships between the various members.⁴

This writer wishes to point out that in spite of the difficulties alluded to in the preceding paragraphs, the original idea and thought underlying *kugara nhaka*, is a noble one. Under normal circumstances, the welfare of the widow and the well-being of the orphans reigned supreme in the traditional extended family situation. The *shirikadzi* (widow) enjoyed the full protection of her new husband (hitherto brother-in-law) and the orphans would not lack a father figure in the home setting.

Many of the indigenous authors take the position that, in general, it is clear that boundaries of kinship interaction and mutual support are not fixed. The fluidity of the familial interactions results in the fact that people constantly move from and within the concentric circles, so that at any given time period a person may be regarded as a distant kin and has little interaction with particular core family members. Yet at another point that same person, in changed circumstances, might be identified as a close kin or a member of the inner family.

Thus, nephews or nieces residing in wholly supported positions with their own parents may be regarded by their uncles or aunts as distant kin should their parents die. They become absorbed into their uncle or aunt's family as close kin and become members of that uncle or aunt's close family. That they should now be sharing a common

⁴Welshman Ncube, *Law, Culture, Tradition and Children's Rights in Eastern and Southern Africa* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 1998), 35.

residence, within the same household, and relating closely with each other in terms of obligations, would define that nephew or niece as a close kin. It is equally clear that need and circumstances determine the continuous fluidity of family membership and hence the construction and constitution of repository, composite and commuter families.

Consanguinity under Threat

The Oxford American College Dictionary defines consanguinity as relating to or denoting people descended from the same ancestor. In the African sense, it means relationships between the extended family systems. What the authors and most African communities could not anticipate was the nearly intractable challenges - as a result of the HIV/AIDS pandemic - which have mercilessly decimated the populations to the extent that several layers of both the nuclear and the extended family systems have been and continue to be wiped out from the surface of the earth. (See diagram on mortality on page 13.)

Consequently, this writer believes that, the situation in Zimbabwe and most Southern African countries, compellingly contradicts the popular belief that consanguinity plays a far more dominant role in defining family structures and obligations. From an individualistic perspective, it can be generalized that individuals, especially children, will more likely prefer their own blood kin as family over that of outsiders/strangers.

On hindsight it can be safely said that perhaps this is the time when the essence of *sahwira*, a close friend of the family, which is common among the Shona speaking, between two families, usually has a long tradition and, at the time of death in a family, the available senior member of another performs the appropriate rites. In the absence of a

traditional *sahwira*, any unrelated friend of the deceased or his family may be appointed to perform the role, in which case a new *sahwira* relationship is created between the two families.⁵

In some areas, the relationship may be confirmed by the exchange of tokens of friendship in the form of some small gift. A bond of friendship guarantees unlimited hospitality and help in times of need. Acts of friendship necessarily follow. In traditional Shona society, good relations with the neighborhood require generosity and liberal hospitality. African folk tales relate the concept that a refusal to offer food to a visitor who arrives when the host is eating demonstrates inhospitality. A refusal to help a person in need is equated with wanting to see him/her and the children starve, which can be defined as a clear indication of malevolence and witchcraft. To ridicule another member of the community may also be regarded unacceptable.⁶

The exigencies of the present times coupled with untold hardships because of a very difficult economic situation, have compelled people to behave in ways that belie their obliviousness to these noble ground rules that bonded the society. Inflation in Zimbabwe is 26,500 percent, the highest anywhere in the world, with the number of orphans in Zimbabwe representing a third of the population.⁷

THE SITUATION OF THE ORPHAN

This then brings the writer to the situation of the orphan or the *nherera*. Prior to the emergence of modern society the family sphere in Zimbabwe constituted the entire

⁵Michael Bourdillon, *The Shona Peoples: Ethnography of the Contemporary Shona with Special Reference to the Religion* (Gweru, Zimbabwe: Mambo Press, 1998), 300.

⁶F. W. T. Posselt, *Fables in the Veld* (London, UK: Oxford University Press, 1929), 100.

⁷The New York Times, Volume CLVII, No. 54,212 (New York, NY: February 6, 2008), A8.

spectrum within which children received shelter, all their education, all their spiritual training, all their training as future producers and farmers. The totality of all their upbringing took place within the environment of the family and therein they witnessed the model of their parents in all things familial. In this case, the food consumed within the family was often as much a product of their labor as it was that of their parents. Thus, the idea of a very dependent child who is fed, clothed, educated and generally brought up at the expense of his/her parents is a concept that is alien to the traditional African upbringing.⁸

The system ensured that the discharge of parental obligations towards their children - their tender years - created reciprocal obligation on the children to support their parents at all times." In this system of things, the child represented positive resources in a multiplicity of ways. In many respects, this is still the case today, except that the frequency and intensity with regards to need for care because of the HIV/AIDS pandemic had tumbled barriers entirely beyond the wildest imagination of the community. The pandemic compels children at very tender ages to grow up into adults overnight due to death of parents, uncles and aunts, who under normal circumstances would be responsible for them and their siblings. It is no exaggeration to say that the *nherera* in Zimbabwe becomes an adult many years before he or his counterpart in Western Europe or North America.

Even though there has not been too much change in the basic ideology of the family structure, certain factors such as economic and social developments have been experienced. The size, location and residential composition of the African family as well as relationships between the family members are not the same. In the urban areas more and more children are being brought up within the context of the nuclear family which is influencing the parent-child relationship and simultaneously redefining childhood more narrowly and away from its extended family definitions that were dominant in traditional society. Thus, the children have in some ways been appropriated by their immediate parents and as such their potential as a resource for a wider family network has been diminished.⁹

Official international treaty instruments relevant to children's rights in Eastern and Southern Africa, including Zimbabwe, have proven enlightening. Such documents as The

⁸Welshman Ncube, *Law, Culture, Tradition and Children's Rights in Eastern and Southern Africa* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 1998), 21.

⁹*Ibid.*, 23.

Declaration of the Rights of the Child (adopted by the United Nations in 1924), the Declaration of The Rights of the Child (adopted by the United Nations in 1959), Article 25 (2) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, the Rights of the Child and African Child Charter greatly aid in the fight for children's rights. Welshman Ncube and his collaborators opine that the conventions on the rights of the child uphold comprehensive domains for the rights of children.

"African culture values the integrity and dignity of children and hence is at one with the principal values of participation, protection, from harm and harmonious rounder growth development enshrined in international instruments of children's rights. The philosophy underlying children's rights is as much Western as it is African. The methods and processes to secure the rights of children may vary quite considerably from one culture to another, and from one region to region, but the underlying values and philosophy forming the foundation of human dignity and integrity are largely cross-cultural and universal and hence the ability of the international community to reach normative consensus on the rights of the child as enshrined in the convention."¹⁰

The issue at stake is not lack of understanding of the various declarations and international instruments on the rights of the child, but rather lack of the political will, on the side of the various African governments and policy makers, to ensure that the said declarations do not only remain in the statute books but are, in fact implemented.

Analysis and Synthesis of Literature Review

The present chapter displays a comprehensive array of thoughts, ideas, theories and theoretical principles in regards to the literature that discusses the essence of the ministry issue. The subject matter of the impact of HIV/AIDS on the '*persona miserabiles*', that is the widows and orphans, and how they have been affected by inheritance under cultural and traditional processes, requires the additional steps of analysis and synthesis. In the book *Inheritance in Zimbabwe: Law, Customs and Practice*, the authors investigated and

¹⁰Ibid., 82.

analyzed inheritance under the customary law and general laws of inheritance, as well as the interaction between the two and the effects they have on families.

A major finding unearthed by their efforts is the divergence between the law as applied by the courts and practices of the people in dealing with the deceased estates. One reason for this is found to be the application by the courts of uniform rules of customary law that not only ignored the diverse customs and usages of the various tribes of Zimbabwe, but oftentimes offered a distorted version of the ideal customary laws and processes of the various tribes in Zimbabwe. The result is confusion and uncertainty as to the content of the law and hardship for families, especially the *shirikadzi* and *nherera*.

The text under review has undoubtedly contributed in no small measure to an insight into the methodologies appropriate to the study of inheritance under customary law as it impacts widows and orphans.

It must be pointed out early at this stage of the study that much as references have been made to the body of knowledge referred to above, the intention of the writer is not to argue or defend the merits or demerits of the text, for obvious reasons. The co-authors placed much premium and rightly so, on the legal aspects of inheritance. This writer directs his energy on inheritance under customary and cultural processes. Besides, any discussion pertaining to legal intricacies of the law of inheritance generally is beyond the competence of this writer. For practical purposes, the writer felt comfortable, even though immensely challenged in many respects, in examining the subject matter from the point of view of scripture, theology and other social dynamics. Furthermore, the desire of the writer is not only to show an appreciation for the existing inheritance laws, but also to know how to assist widows and orphans in appropriating such laws to meet the new

challenges of present day exigencies.

In the past, the incidence of widowhood came about largely as a result of death of *madzibaba*, the patriarch of the family, at advanced age through natural causes; and to lesser extent through internecine wars, accidents in the stone quarry, drowning while fishing, or being attacked by wild animals or things of that nature. Deaths because of vehicular mishaps were rare. Then it was possible to leave the welfare of the widow and the orphan in the capable hands of both the nuclear and the extended family members. Now it is no longer the case.

Because of the devastating effects of HIV/AIDS, the number of widows increases by the several thousands and that of orphans triples. The enormity of the problems that beset the bereaved households overwhelms the community, to say the least. Consequently, hitherto age-old cultural practices that had been tried and tested and which glued the families and the community together are falling apart "and the center cannot hold." With resources so thinly stretched, and the community breathlessly calling for help, common sense informs that court litigation should have no place in the equation when it comes to sharing the estate of *madzibaba*.

The way forward, the writer posits, is to rely, among other things, on theories and practices drawing from the experiences of the widows themselves. Being a woman in poverty-stricken patriarchal society of Zimbabwe is already enough trouble by any standard. Becoming a widow at comparatively tender age, because of HIV/AIDS, under very difficult economic circumstances, is asking for too much.

Harold Bennett, whose work also informs this study, posits that, "Legal sanctions disadvantage categories of vulnerable underclass in human societies. What is more,

widows, strangers and orphans were among the economically and politically powerless in ancient Israel.” He further argues:

“Critical theorizing about legal injunctions examines laws with a concern for the economically and politically powerless in a human society, and it allows the historical consciousness of these types of people to elucidate discussion on the effects of law in human societies. A theoretical framework informed by critical theory about law honors the perspective of a category of vulnerable persons in ancient Israelite society by treating these types of persons as the central subjects in the investigative process. By exploring these texts from the perspective that might be analogous to the perspective of vulnerable underclass persons in societies, scholars permit unheard voices in these codes to speak.”¹¹

In furtherance of the foregoing concept, the writer chooses to appropriate the Gender Development (GAD) approach. Research undertaken within this framework is based on the premise that if one understands the position of women [widows] in society, then one has the key to improving their position. In relation to inheritance under the customary process, some would argue that the GAD would have been the most relevant approach to take, as it affords researchers and women the opportunity to act as agents of change rather than passive recipients of development assistance. In other words, GAD seeks to empower women, to give them an equal voice by recognizing the full spectrum of their knowledge, experience and activities.¹²

Stumbling Blocks and Challenges

Thus far, the writer has been able to lay bare the legal and moral injunctions as per the texts quoted above. What remains to be done in this chapter is to continue to flesh out what the interfaith community has been advised to do to ameliorate the situation of the widow and her children. It means a fundamental paradigm shift in behavior and action

¹¹Harold Bennett, *Injustice Made Legal: Deuteronomic Law and the Plight of Widows, Strangers and Orphans in Ancient Israel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2002), 33.

¹²Kebokile Dengu-Zvogbo, et al., *Inheritance in Zimbabwe: Law, Customs and Practices* (Harare, Zimbabwe: Women and Law in Southern Africa Research Trust, 1994), 20-21.

between married couples (especially the man long before he turns into a corpse). The church has a big role to play in this regard.

The subordinate status of women often means that they are unable to negotiate safe sex with their husbands/partners. The church itself has been a place where sexual abuse has been allowed to occur, without any repercussions against the mainly male perpetrators. For the church to become a place of redemption, hope and healing, positive Christian teaching on sexuality must be introduced. Women, particularly, need to view the church as a safe space to unburden the load they carry as subordinate partners in marriage relationships. They need to know that their husbands' unfaithfulness will not go unchallenged by the church, nor will those whom they take into their confidence dismiss their stories of abuse. The interfaith community must see its ministry in an HIV-positive world as sacred space where sexuality is celebrated in its goodness, and challenged where it brings death.

Celebrating our African-ness can be ambiguous for African women because in certain instances, cultural traditions can pose a threat in an HIV-positive world. Traditional African culture regards women as inferior to men and relegates them to the back burner of life. Both in private and in public life, the traditional decision-makers are men.

In the traditional inheritance systems, widows do not receive any of the deceased's property, though they do keep their own personal effects including any personal gifts the husband may have made over to them during his life. In the rural subsistence economy, a widow continues to work the fields her late husband allocated to her and she is cared for either by his relatives or by her own family if she refuses to accept an inheritor. The

inheritor is most probably the younger brother of the late husband. In the urban situation, a widow may well be left destitute by her husband's kinspersons who often claim all his property purchased with the joint incomes of both husband and wife.¹³

It is accepted that women's role is to please men sexually, and they have little or no say over the kinds of sexual practices in which the men engage. African practices such as *roora* or *lobola* (in the case of the Ndebele-speaking) contribute to women's cultural vulnerability to HIV/AIDS. Conversations with women indicate that their husbands often treat them as if they are 'chattel property', because the men pay *roora* in order to marry them. The negotiation process consumes a considerable amount of time in this practice.

The groom's family will be gnashing their teeth, sitting on tentacles, so to say, anxiously waiting to know whether the bride's family agrees to accept the bride price or not. At this time all attention seems to be focused on the "how much" the bride will cost the groom's family rather than whether the would-be bride and her partner possess all the qualities that should constitute a successful marriage. Men go to great lengths - including borrowing money at hefty interest rates - in order to raise and assemble the bride price. Right from the beginning, the life of the young couple is saddled with debt that appears as an albatross around their necks.

The wives find themselves helpless and stressed out because they had no say in the contracting of the marriage concerning the bride price. The bride's own kinsmen and aunts, who are prominent and at the forefront of the negotiations for the bride price, show very little or no interest at all as to what might happen to their daughter and niece after the glitz and the "ballyhoo" of the marriage ceremony.

¹³Michael Bourdillon, *The Shona Peoples: An Ethnography of Contemporary Shona with Special Reference to the Religion* (Gweru, Zimbabwe: Mambo Press, 1998), 215-216.

The proprietary treatment extends to the couple's sexual relationship, with the husband expecting sex on demand. Requesting the use of a condom often evokes anger and suspicion. Therefore, women feel hesitation about insisting its use. A chat with a woman living with HIV/AIDS serves to further illustrate the assertions being made above:

Interviewer: When did you realize that you were HIV-positive?

Interviewee: One year into the relationship between my husband and a widow in our church. I became angry and depressed, and friends advised me to get a boyfriend. I did, and barely six months later, I tested HIV-positive, but kept the news from my husband.

Interviewer: What about your husband, is he ok?

Interviewee: No, he tested positive much earlier than I did. He did not tell me, I only stumbled on the information, but I refuse to confirm or deny.

Summary

The literature review and ancillary topics encompassing the threat of consanguinity, the lot of the widow and the orphan, the pitiable situation of the nuclear and the extended family systems, as well as the analysis and synthesis of the literature review, together provide a panoply of unending array of a quagmire unseen in modern history. This is to the extent that no one person or group of persons can claim to have answers to the problems at the ministry setting. Every little step of the way in the execution of the project is fraught with surprises and unforeseen circumstances. Otherwise, who would have thought that the direst need of the widow impacted by HIV/AIDS in Zimbabwe is not medicine but the basic necessity of life - food? Consequently, in addition to assisting

the interfaith community and the widows through the propagation and distribution of information on inheritance under the customary process, new strategies have to be introduced midstream in providing food.

The review as cited above forms the backdrop and the body of knowledge from which the rest of the activities of the project pivot. It must, however, be borne in mind that all the selected literature, and other sources on the subject matter of inheritance, were published at a time when the scourge of HIV/AIDS has not attained the dizzying heights and the penultimate character of unquenchable destroyer of life and decimation of people in Zimbabwe. What this writer has to contend with, under the prevailing circumstances, is to try to align the concepts on the issue of inheritance in line with the exigencies and challenges being faced by widows and orphans impacted by HIV/AIDS on day to day basis.

By this methodology, the writer is equipped to better able understand and demystify the seemingly intractable issues of HIV/AIDS, poverty, deprivation and exclusion, as they manifest themselves at the ministry setting. It must also be noted very quickly that the authors whose ideas informed this project did a marvelous job. The results of their research in various aspects of the subject matter cannot be faulted.

Any other shortcomings and or deficiencies as may be detected in this project are the sole responsibility of this writer. It is equally refreshing to note that this project is carried out at a time when Westerners are slowly but surely giving credence to scholarly works emanating from the Continent of Africa.

Until now, scholarly works from Africa had tended to be ignored in North America, Europe, when not dismissed as fussy, gimmicky, perfunctory, and tad kitschy.

A review of sources by African scholars, theologians and thinkers, invites reconsideration of the negative attitudes mentioned above.

CHAPTER IV

A DESCRIPTION OF THE MINISTRY PROJECT

The writer's rationale for undertaking this project revolves around four objectives. The first objective relates to studying, describing and analyzing the doctrine of inheritance under the customary process and practices with a view of finding ways and means to help widows and orphans who have been severely impacted by HIV/AIDS. Secondly, the writer desired to assess the needs and resources of the target community in order to plan relevant and effective interventions with the context of the faith community. Thirdly, he hoped to encourage the interfaith communities to re-examine their cultural practices vis-à-vis their theologies and how these affect the plight of the widows and orphans in light of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Finally, the writer identified the political and human service systems of the community in order to increase the likelihood that these entities would be supportive of the ministry project. The entire project was designed to operate on six legs, namely (1) conceptualization, (2) planning, (3) communication, (4) implementation, (5) monitoring, and (6) evaluation.

The conceptual framework appropriates the theoretical framework or body of knowledge about the ramifications of HIV/AIDS and its effects on the identified 'public'. This public includes widows and orphans, members and hierarchy of the interfaith communities, the immediate community and members of the church organizations, as well as existing institutions who are already engaged in providing assistance, in one form or another, to the populace who reside in the context. The conceptual framework is the foundation of the research project/survey.

The theoretical framework includes all the theories that have been enunciated to

explain the relationship between high mortality rates in relation to the disease and the lack of adequate support for the widows and orphans. The conceptual framework also brings to the fore the response of people in the community and more particularly in the church, through their day-to-day relational encounters with their families - the nuclear and the extended ones - as well as the church. In other words, shared assumptions, ideas, patterns of thought, behavior, morality, politics, and espoused values are clearly articulated in ways that describe their negative effects on the situation.¹

The planning stage entails preparing a working document that includes a questionnaire and highlights of the following data: mission for the project, the vision, achievable objectives and the general methodology and approach for the research project.² The nature of the research project employs a combination of both qualitative and quantitative methods. The survey includes a comparative study of the perceptions of pastors, laity and faith-based social service practitioners regarding HIV/AIDS education and prevention, attitudes, beliefs and behaviors concerning widows and orphans, as well as others living with the disease.³

In addition to certain demographic information, the questionnaire delved into the matter of inheritance under the customary process and the judicial system. It must be pointed out that this writer and his team of interviewers observed an ethical obligation to respondents with regard to how certain personal and confidential information was handled. The reason for this is that certain aspects of the questionnaire touched on

¹George Thompson, Jr., *How to Get Along with Your Church: Creating Cultural Capital for Doing Ministry* (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2001), 7.

²Michael I. N. Dash and Christine Chapman, *The Shape of Zion: Leadership and Life in Black Churches* (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2003), 72.

³W. K. Kellogg, *Foundation Evaluation Handbook* (Battle Creek, MI: Kellogg Publishing, 1998), 96.

sensitivities. Such incursions into the sensitivities of people involved with the survey, made this writer cognizant of the fact that he needed to ensure that the rights, privacy and welfare of the respondents receive the importance they deserve. It is not difficult to understand that veering into discussions that pertain to the use of various drug protocols for the treatment of HIV/AIDS, or sexual practices can be viewed as unethical. This writer chose to tread softly in these un-chartered waters.

This writer served as the overall coordinator of the project. A number of retired and experienced educators (mainly women as well as students from post-secondary academic environment) worked with the writer. No church member of any of the constituent interfaith communities was allowed to participate in the survey exercise as an interviewer. Interviewers were advised not to engage in any activity during the survey that distanced or reduced respondents into bits of dispassionate data. This writer ensured that the interviewers treated all the participants in the survey with dignity and respect.

Communication involved the submission of the project draft to some opinion movers in the community of faith for their perusal and input, all in aid of eliciting sympathy and support. The reason for adopting the "communication" method is to ensure a broad-based approach and to cultivate a spirit of belonging. This is also in consonance with an Akan proverb, *benuye*, meaning two heads are better than one. This method also helped the writer understand how to approach the task of developing a comprehensive plan, which would be used to construct a variety of techniques to support the widows and orphans.

It is at this stage of the project that the writer learned how to navigate sensitive issues of sex, sexuality, and sex education as understood and practiced in the various

churches. African cultural norms demand, and in fact dictate, that certain words may not be uttered under any circumstance. The writer desired to give attention in equal measure to explain why the writer decided to use a “descriptive method of research”:

In this sense, a Doctor of Ministry case study offers the story of a careful documentation and a critical reflection upon a specific practice/situation in ministry. With this area of activity, the term case study therefore refers to (1) the case study process used to facilitate a specific practice or ministry, and (2) the eventual written description (the story) of how that practice of ministry. There is both a process orientation to the use of the case study approach (how one collected data), and a product orientation to the use of the case study approach (the resultant case study). Written as a case study, in this case the “end paper” otherwise referred to as the dissertation, of the D. Min. course study can be highly readable yet critically reflective documentation providing an interpretive framework that both informs and challenges the clergy, the community and the primary focus groups as it were.⁴

More importantly, the “communication” stage helped this writer to determine what tactics of research are best suited in prioritizing the “marketing mix.”

Implementation occurs once all the knotty points have been resolved. The final questionnaire is formulated, coded and distributed. The exercise of the discipline of prayer in the various churches precedes the actual implementation of the project. The survey activity is distributed to two categories of the focus group - those within the church, and those outside of the church. Within the church, there are carefully selected controlled groups who responded to a series of questions and situations at a specific time with a focus leader. The second part consists of questions distributed to individuals in the surrounding communities to which answers were supplied without intervention from a focus leader.

Monitoring builds relationships in the church and the community, thereby cultivating loyal friends and good neighbors. Developing and maintaining an “insider”

⁴William R. Myers, *Research in Ministry: A Primer for the Doctor of Ministry Program* (Chicago: Exploration Press, 2000), 38.

network within the church is enhanced through a review of strategies and techniques while the project is being implemented so that the needs of the targeted audience might be met. This reduced “bottlenecks” at the end of the evaluation period when the final report was compiled. As part of the monitoring exercise, this writer maintained field notes in the form of a journal. The journaling activity became a source of “factual historical periodization” of the project - that is to say a documented regimen of how certain events occurred on a certain day, what happened next, and how it was to be in the future. The latter, among other things, startled this writer’s internal state of mind and composure (or lack thereof) in a particular locality or space, personal judgments, fears, doubts and joys. This methodology of codifying the writer’s internal experiences proved helpful in the final stages of the project.

As an interviewer and the sole coordinator of the project, this writer noticed certain interesting phenomena that occurred during the survey and group discussions. Salutation pays a very important role in African communities. For a person conversant in the nuances of non-verbal communication, many times things that remain unsaid become more audible than those, which are verbalized. In certain African communities, the excessive use of the left hand in conversation connotes negativity or dissatisfaction. The Ga-Adangbe proverb that says, “Nobody uses the left hand to show the way to his/her father’s house,” underscores this language reality. Some scholars have defined this as “social interpretation.”

Social interpretations are the affected messages transferred from one acting individual to another through non-verbal channels. These non-verbal channels include body gestures, facial grimaces, signs, symbols, and even some phonemic sounds such as tongue clicks, grunts, sighs, and similar visible indicators of communication (for example physical proximity between participant actors, their blocking, and so forth). Interviewers must hear not only what the subjects say but

also how they say it.⁵

Evaluation was carried out by a careful collation of the completed questionnaire and information that had been gathered during and after the interviews, as well as the discussions that took place at the various workshops and seminars. The actual evaluation exercise was organized in three different stages. The first stage comprised a seminar at which all interviewers were requested to attend. Besides the completed questionnaire, interviewers were encouraged to report to the gathering, especially this writer. The process captured their candid opinions surrounding the entire exercise and the benefits they received. Additionally, each interviewer disclosed their own preconceived notions, if any, about the persons they encountered and how they related to them during the survey.

Within the immediate confines of the ministry setting, there is the tendency on the part of some people to identify persons infected by HIV/AIDS, including widows and orphans, as well as those living with the disease, as a monolithic block or a collective such as an anthill or a beehive. Nothing could be further from the truth. There are diversities in age, sex, and sexuality, economic strengths, disparities in status (highs and lows and many in between), different depths of spirituality, diverse physicality and distinctions in careers.

The second mode of evaluation comes from views expressed by the generality of members of the various church denominations who were familiar with the project. Closely aligned to this is the opinion expressed by some captains of industry and commerce who woefully lamented the loss of trained manpower who had been impacted by HIV/AIDS. The public sector (soldiers, teachers, prison warders, civil servants, people working in quasi government organizations, et cetera) is the single biggest loser of

⁵Bruce L. Berg, *Qualitative Research Methods* (Boston: Pearson Education, Inc., 2004), 101.

manpower as a result of the disease. Strong views were vented by members of the extended family who seem to face the brunt of the suffering of the widows and orphans.

Interpersonal Relations with the Project Team

The writer held a series of meetings with the leadership of the interfaith community at various times and places. The aim of these meetings was to engage the leaders to observe the conditions of the widows and orphans as the writer sought ways and means of alleviating some of the problems that befall them following the death of *Baba* as a result of HIV/AIDS.

The writer encouraged the leaders to scrutinize the entire process of death, burial, mourning and other rituals insofar as they have a bearing on inheritance under the customary process and practice. Further examinations focused the leaders on understanding the effects of these rituals on widows and orphans. Other areas of discussions covered the nature and effect on the content and practice of inheritance under the customary procedures, competing interests in the estate; and the issue of polygamy and its effect upon inheritance.

The highlight of the meetings culminated in a two-day seminar held for interviewers and field workers for the project. Sixteen persons designated for this aspect of the project attended the seminar. The three major interview structures centered on the "family of qualitative interviews," namely the standard interviews, the semi standard interviews, and the unstandardized interviews. For the purposes of this project, members of the project team opted to employ the semi-standard approach.⁶

The semi-standardized interview can be located between the extremes of the

⁶Bruce L. Berg, *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2004), 80.

completely standardized and the completely unstandardized interviewing structures. This type of interview involves the implementation of a number of predetermined questions and special topics. Questions are typically asked of each interviewee in a systematic and consistent order. However, the interviewers are allowed freedom to digress, that is, the interviewers are permitted (in fact, expected) to probe far beyond the answers to their standardized questions.

Again, certain assumptions underlie this strategy. First, if questions are to be standardized, they must be formulated in words familiar to the people being interviewed (in vocabularies of the subjects). Questions used in the semi-standardized interviews reflected an awareness that individuals understand the designated context. This writer called participant's attention to the sensitivities for the participants in order to avoid derogatory slurs when describing all categories of unacceptable attitudes and behaviors. For example after being asked a question, the interviewee might have responded with brief "yes" or "no". In order to elicit more information, the interviewer would then ask, "And then?" or "Oh is that right, could you tell me more about it?" An example of this format follows:

Interviewer: How about your family, do they know about your sexual activities?

Interviewee: Yes, yes, they do know what I do. However, my in-laws do not like it. On some occasions, they threaten to take from me the house that my late husband and I built, and send me and the children back to my parents.

Interviewer: What do your parents, brothers and sisters say about you having an affair with a married man who may not be HIV-positive?

Interviewee: My parents got (sic) to know because I told my sister about the

affair. My parents did not believe it was a good idea. They cautioned me but did not condemn me as such.

It is obvious that the intention and desire of the writer was to encourage the project team to gain a more reflective and intimate understanding of the widows' emotional experiences. He advised them to use an interactive approach and a "leader structured interviewing style." This writer views interviewing as a collaborative communication process occurring between researchers and respondents without assigning blame and bias. In tandem with African traditional norms and practices, such conversations should be interactive, involving sharing of personal and social experiences of both respondents and researchers, who either tell or write their stories in the context of developing a relationship. Furthermore, members of the team were advised to avoid certain affective words that are likely to arouse in most people an emotional response that was usually negative. For instance, the word 'why', in African culture, tends to produce in most people a negative response. One possible explanation has to do with the accusatory/punitive connotation of the question, as in "Why would you have an affair with a married man?" This is the reason why this sort of question was deliberately avoided in the example given above.

H. S. Becker corroborates the seriousness of knowing the language of the interviewee both in order to ask understandable questions and to interpret correctly what the interviewee says in response. He cites the following example:

"Although we speak one language and share in many ways in one culture, we cannot assume that we understand precisely what another person, speaking as a member of such a group, means by any particular word. In interviewing members other than our own, then, we are in somewhat the same position as the anthropologist who must learn one language, with the important difference that, we often do not understand that we do not understand and are thus likely to make

errors interpreting what is said to us.⁷

The seminar encompassed discussion relative to the role and rapport of the interviewer. As has already been mentioned, the semi-standardized method of interviewing is intended to convey the notion of a very fluid and flexible format of conducting research interviews. With regard to rapport, which can be defined as the positive feelings that develop between the interviewer and the subject, it should not be understood as meaning there are no boundaries between the interviewer and the subject. The semi-standardized way of conducting interview should be interpreted as a conversation between two people, conversing on one person's perceptions on the events of daily life.

The seminar emphasized the point that this style of interview does not allocate equal time to those in the conversation. In fact, the ideal situation is to encourage the interviewee to engage in a monologue type of interaction on the research topic. After all, the intention is to obtain as much information as possible from the interviewee. Toward this end, some feminist researchers argue that interviewers must be willing to offer self-disclosures of personal information and develop genuine relationships with their interviewees beyond the boundaries of the roles of interviewer and interviewees.⁸

The Resurrection Ministry: A Wholistic Approach

The forms of worship, the understanding of sexuality, the relation of the church to society, the political life and the profound cultural changes have called into question earlier certitudes that were once the foundation of confident pastoral action. This exciting

⁷H. S. Becker, *Writing for Social Scientists* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 222.

⁸Bruce Berg, *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2004), 89.

but often bewildering complexity in contemporary Christian life heightens the need for a method of reflection: a systematic way to approach the various sources of information, one that leads not only to theoretical insight, but also to pastoral decision. Christian ministry today requires a method of reflection that is at once theological and practical. As theological, it must attend confidently and competently to the resources of Scripture and the historical tradition. As well as being practical, it must be more than theoretically sound. It must be sufficiently clear and concrete in ways that allow it be used by persons and groups in the church. It must be open to pastoral response. The need for such a method - at once pastoral and theological - is addressed in this chapter.⁹

The Resurrection Ministry straddles a strategic plan, mission, vision and goals. A strategic plan is simply defined as a management tool. As a management tool, it is used for one purpose: to help the project team do a better job, to focus its energy, to ensure that members of the team are working toward the same goal, to assess and adjust the team's direction in response to the challenges at the ministry setting. This is a disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide what the project team does and why it pursues this effort with a focus on the future.

The strategic plan provides the project team with the compass that enables it to move strategically and on one accord, as proposed by the Apostle Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians, "According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder, I laid a foundation and someone else is building on it. Each builder must choose with care how to build on it."¹⁰

⁹James D. Whitehead and Evelyn Eaton Whitehead, *Method in Ministry: Theological Reflection and Christian Ministry* (Kansas City: Shield and Ward, 1995), x.

¹⁰1 Corinthians 3:10 (NRSV).

A strategic plan allows a religious institution to build the kingdom of God using tools that are readily available. These same tools must be based upon the work of God, whether in the church or the larger community. The various religious organizations within the identified interfaith community at the ministry setting are encouraged to fashion their own strategic plans strictly according to available resources and needs.

The mission of the Resurrection Ministry is to work to help the widows and orphans understand that there are cycles of life. Therefore, needs change and the support that one needs from others adapts. The project team provides the support, education, information, and assistance needed to handle these life's changes.

The goals of the project are two-fold in nature: 1) to serve as an infrastructure of support, emotional and psychological, for difficult family and social situations and 2) to support grief, loss and bereavement.

The strategies adopted by the project team include the provision of information, education, and referrals available to community resources; partner with multi-faith leaders and members of the community who can offer support, identify resources for individual study and additional insight into issues surrounding inheritance under the customary process involving widows, as well as information regarding mentoring of orphans. For the efficacy of business, the project team designed four action steps in order to directly engage the focus group. These four steps are to:

1. Develop and distribute written materials about existing support groups such as hospice facilities, hospitals, and nursing homes;
2. Partner with interfaith leaders and members of the community who offer support to the targeted audience;

3. Serve as liaison for Christian counseling, education and spiritual direction by networking with other community agencies and
4. To build and enhance Biblical knowledge which can be applied to life experiences by way of highlighting specific crisis/resolutions.

As already alluded to at the beginning of this section, the Resurrection Ministry operates as an umbrella ministry with other specific activities under it. One such activity introduced by the project is 'Crossroads', otherwise known as the Career Ministry. This ministry assists the widows and orphans at the crossroads in their lives, to listen and follow God's calling. The mission of the Crossroads Career Ministry is to provide practical, spiritual and emotional support to the widows and orphans in order to achieve three goals namely: (1) to help participants grow in their relationship with Jesus Christ; (2) to help participants discover their God-given talents and interests, and (3) to help participants find or create appropriate employment opportunities.

Two resource persons, including this writer, are responsible for the implementation and guidance of this particular activity. In so doing they have to probe the Gospel by searching for fresh ways in which the Gospel gives resources for a confident witness to Jesus Christ. They are guided by the conviction that Scripture is the normative and authoritative witness to God's mission and its unfolding in human history. It means whatever one believes about the church needs to be discovered and based on what the Bible teaches.

With this as the background, all participants in the focus groups are encouraged to attend two seminars at which core values relevant to the subject matter are discussed. These core values emanate in the following formats:

1. Giving God glory in all things irrespective of one's situation in life as enunciated in Deuteronomy 6:13, Psalm 86:11-13; and Romans 15:5-7.

The first verse of the thirteenth chapter of Deuteronomy says, "Fear the Lord your God, serve him only and take your oaths in his name." Undoubtedly, this text of Scripture forms the foundation of the Christian faith just as Mark recorded in chapter 12 verse 30, "Love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength." Having surrendered totally to the will of God, the Psalmist asks for guidance and direction to show appreciation for deliverance in Psalm 86: 11-13. The above quoted text in Romans calls for love and unity of purpose.

2. Growing to become more like Christ as found in Galatians 2: 20, Philippians 2: 5-8, and Colossians 3:17.

Being the body of Christ, men and women of faith are called upon to be selfless and less self-centered, always being ready to show humility in the same manner that Christ demonstrated to the disciples.

3. Striving for excellence in all one pursues as announced in Colossians 3; 23-24. The lesson here is to encourage Christians to shun laziness and aim at perfection in order to glorify God.

4. Being good stewards of all resources as the Gospel displays in Matthew 25: 21. The wisdom here is to aspire to be responsible for whatever is entrusted into one's care, and to be accountable for whatever one does.

5. Valuing people above things and processes as crystallized in Galatians 5:6b and Philippians 2:3.

In the survey exercise, interviewers are advised to exercise restraint,

temperance and respect in their interaction with interviewees. Resurrection Ministry viewed the participants as human beings, not as numbers.

6. Seeking guidance through prayer and Scripture as portrayed in the text of John 17:7, Colossians 4:2 and 2Timothy 3:16-17.

7. Seeking the work that God has prepared for them as reflected in Ephesians 2:10.

Learning to wait patiently to hear the will of God is a valuable trait. William James says, "I had made all the pleas I ever could have made to all eternity; that all my pleas were vain, for I saw that self-interest had led me to pray, and that I had never once prayed from any respect to the glory of God."¹¹

Opportunities in Vocational Training

The practical aspect of this ministry activity is expertly handled by two experienced vocational instructors who introduced the widows to opportunities that abound in the area of dressmaking, pattern cutting and design, bread baking, textile design, tie and dye, typing, welding, hair platting, and auto mechanics.

Orphans who have completed their high school education are guided to training that allows them to enter vocational fields as electricians, welders, appliance repairpersons, auto mechanics, tailors, heating/air conditioning technicians and interior decorators. All the participants in the Career Guidance Ministry - a sub unit within the Career Ministry - are advised about the minimum requirements in respect of qualification, the length of each course, tuition and tools required. Additionally, the project team prepared a list of possible sponsors who are available to grant free tuition or another form scholarship that

¹¹William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: Introduction by Reinhold Niebuhr* (New York: Simon and Schuster Inc., 1997), 177.

will enable the participants to receive proper training. A number of companies who are former clients of Target Communications Private Limited, a business and public relations consultancy, founded and managed by this writer. These entities readily agreed to allow some members of the focus group to participate as apprentices in order to acquire job skills.

Challenges

The writer and the project team encountered a number of challenges in this aspect of the pastoral activity. Two main problems that assailed the project team during the seminars were lack of punctuality by participants (not because of lack of interest but lack of public transport and money to pay for the fare) and lack of food. Even though the project provides food at all the gatherings of the focus groups, the situation is not the same in their respective homes. If a participant did not eat the day before a gathering, frequently happened, chances are that they would not be in the attendance at the session.

Other problems encountered by the project team were that most of the companies who had agreed to undertake sponsorship of participants are not at full capacity because of the depressed economic situation in Zimbabwe. In fact, others have closed down their businesses because of the lack of foreign exchange for the importation of essential input for commercial and industrial activities. Notwithstanding the problems mentioned above, this writer is able to encourage participants within the focus groups to maintain an appreciable degree of enthusiasm.

Workshop on Inheritance under the Customary Process

As has already been mentioned above, there is reason for concern because of recent trends and new challenges being faced by widows and orphans impacted by HIV/AIDS,

with regard to inheritance under the customary process. The pervasive nature of the issues on the subject matter, provide the impetus for conducting a workshop on this matter.¹² A retired magistrate was the sole resource person who conducted the workshop, (in July 2006), which lasted for five days, at the all-purpose hall at the Uniting City Presbyterian Church in Chitungwiza. Twenty of the widows, registered for the project, as well as nine others from the larger community, attended this event. The focus for this event pivoted around the five main topics, including a discussion on the various types of inheritance. Basic information and facts on customary law inheritance when a person dies without a will, is the most popular topic for the gathering.¹³

In order to engender lively discussion and create an atmosphere of conviviality, participants squat on raffia mats on the floor in a circle in order to invoke the spirit of *indaba*, the usual family gathering in the village. Furthermore, the resource person did not act like a teacher in front of a class, but rather like a conductor of an orchestra, who by sign language and gestures encourages the musicians to produce quality musical sounds. In other words, the workshop format took the form of questions and answers set-up. Discussions ensued and finally dialogue emerged. The atmosphere was quite relaxed and informal. People voluntarily entered the conversation.

In her introductory remarks, the Resource Person identified herself as the leader of the gathering. She then proceeded to define specific terms that relate to inheritance.

¹²Stuart Oskamp and Suzzane C. Thompson, *Understanding and Preventing HIV Risk Behavior: Safer Sex and Drug Use* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1996), 32.

¹³Legal Resources Foundation of Zimbabwe (LRF), *Inheritance under Customary Law* (Harare, Zimbabwe, LRF, 2006), 1-16.

Terms such as estate, testate, wills, and inheritance were given.¹⁴

The discussion about inheritance began in earnest as the widows occupied their raffia mat seats. The importance of the information to the widows was understood with immediacy from the opening statements. The customary law is the law of the indigenous Zimbabwean, as the tribal chiefs and the court system have administered it over the years. It varies from one ethnic group to another. The general law is the law that was brought to Zimbabwe by the European settlers and has been added to by legislation and developed by court decisions.¹⁵ This distinction between the customary process and the general serves to underscore the importance of the workshop. As the participants grasped the seriousness of the session, questions flowed according to the following schematics.

The first question from the floor was posed by W1 (Widow 1), a recently widowed 28-year-old mother of three girls and a boy all aged between two and 11 years of age. She is single, and six months pregnant with the fifth child, although the husband had been dead for barely eighteen months. Her late husband did not marry her formally and he did not leave a will. She desires to know which law of inheritance is applicable in her situation.

If a person dies without a will, it has to be decided which law will be applied. The law says that the way people live should determine whether customary law or general law should apply.

If someone lived traditionally (steeped in a certain cultural way of life and did not bother to marry at the High Court) in other words following a customary way of life, then

¹⁴Ibid., 2.

¹⁵Ibid., 2.

customary law should apply. Normally, if someone was married according to customary law, it will be assumed that they wished customary law to be applied to them. On the other hand, if one lived in a more modern way, then general law should apply. If the one had a civil marriage and died in testate, it will be assumed that they wanted general law to apply to them. If a person is not married and has never been married, his/her life style will determine which law to apply. Sometimes if a person is single the marriage which their parents experienced will indicate which process of law will be followed. General Law will always apply to anyone who is not indigenous African Zimbabwean, because a non-African cannot have a customary law marriage. Even if *roora* is paid, customary law of inheritance does not apply to non-Africans.¹⁶

After a lengthy and spirited discussion on the floor, which seemed to have touched on certain sensitivities that are too graphic to record here, W1 proffered the next question. Looking rather subdued, but visibly upset, and yet determined to come to some form of resolution of her situation she asked, "What if there is a dispute about which law to apply?" According to the resource person, the rules about which law applies are sometimes confusing. If someone in the family thinks that customary law should apply and someone else thinks general law should apply, the dispute can be taken to court, and the magistrate will make a decision.

The second day of the meeting took the form of group meetings with each group selecting a spokesperson that would later relay each group's concern to the larger gathering for further deliberation.

Group A composed of W2, W3, W4, W5, W6, W7, and W8 presented questions

¹⁶Ibid., 3.

that pertained to the inheritance under the customary law where no will exists. The response of the resource person indicates that generally the property will be shared among the spouse or spouses and the children. The law applies in the same way whether a customary law marriage was registered or not. If a man dies leaving a widow whose marriage was registered and another widow whose marriage was not registered, they will be treated the same way. Whoever was married first will be the first wife. If the marriage was not registered, and *roora* was not paid, but there is proof that the families accepted the relationship as marriage, the union will be recognized. If the couple lived together but the families did not conclude negotiation, the marriage will not be recognized.¹⁷

The next question from Group A pertained to the property that would be shared. The response indicates that the family must reach an agreement on how the property is to be shared. However, certain guidelines govern this process. These include the following:

1. Anyone who has been looked after by the deceased person must be provided for. A plan as to how the property will be shared must be drawn up, and approved by a magistrate.
2. The magistrate ensures that all dependents are included.
3. If the family is unable to reach an agreement, the magistrate will make a decision that he/she deems to be fair and judicious.
4. If there is one surviving spouse, she or he will inherit the house and household goods, and the remaining property will be divided between the spouse and the children. The spouse will get a larger share. If the estate is small, the children may receive nothing.

¹⁷Ibid., 4.

5. If there is more than one surviving wife and some children, each wife will inherit the house she was living in and its household goods. The wives will share one third of the remaining property with the senior wife getting a larger share. All the children will divide the other two thirds of the remaining property equally. The amount inherited by each wife does not relate to her contribution to the matrimonial property.

6. If there are surviving children but no surviving spouse, the children will share the property equally.

7. If there is a surviving wife but no children, the wife will get the house and household property, plus half of the rest of the property. The other half will be shared equally among the surviving parents, brothers and sisters of the deceased.¹⁸

At the end of the second day, participants appealed to this writer, that in view of the difficulty in securing transportation to and from the venue of the workshop and their respective homes, accommodation be provided for the duration of the meeting. After due consultation with the moderator of the Uniting City Presbyterian Church, temporary arrangements were made. The multi-purpose hall was converted into sleeping quarters for the ladies. With accommodation secured, the third day started with gusto.

The issue that agitated the minds of Group B (comprising W8, W9, W10, W11, W12, W13, W14, W15, W16, and W17) was how to manage their business affairs in the absence of their husbands. A lively discussion ensued, and participants who had hitherto not said much contributed immensely. It seemed this particular topic was dear to the hearts of all the widows present. Their question relates to how to administer the estates of

¹⁸Ibid., 4-5.

the deceased.

The process of paying debts and sharing out the property of a person who has died is called administering his or her estate. Estate administration proceeds under the supervision of the court to make sure that the law of inheritance is being followed. When customary law is applied, the magistrate's court supervises the administration of the estate thus a close family member must report to the customary law division at the magistrate court, taking with them the deceased person's national registration card, marriage and death certificates. The courts require the family member to complete three forms: a notice of death, an affidavit that must be copied four times and a preliminary inventory in the estate.

If the estate (all the property) is worth more than a predetermined limit, the magistrate assembles a family caucus with the intention of appointing an executor to administer the estate. This is called an edict meeting. The clerk of court will assist the family in placing a notice for publication in the Government Gazette and the local newspaper.¹⁹

The first part of the fourth day was spent in review of the topics that were discussed in the three previous days in order to ensure clarity and comprehension. Discussion on the duties of the executor ensued on the second half of the fourth day.

The resource person explained that an executor is a person appointed by the court to oversee the deceased person's property and the distribution of the estate according to the law. The executor is not entitled to inherit any property simply because he or she is executor; but often the executor will be one of the members of the family who may be

¹⁹Ibid., 7.

entitled to inheritance.

The judicial system provides the executor a Letter of Administration that allows her or him to do the following:

- (a) Open a bank account in the name of the estate
- (b) Pay any debts that the deceased owed and collect any debts which were owed to his or her.
- (c) Prepare a statement of accounts showing the assets of the estate and the liabilities (all claims against the estate or money owed by it).

Finally, the executor drafts an inheritance plan.

On the fifth and final day, each participant was given two choices to evaluate the relevance of the workshop in relation to her needs and expectations. Participants were allowed to either to complete an appraisal form or give a verbal report at the meeting. Most participants opted for the latter. Response from the widows was overwhelmingly positive. However, one widow whose husband died ten years ago, recounted problems she encountered from the family of her late husband about the appointment of *tete*, the late husband's sister, as the executor, and the fact that the inheritance plan drawn by *tete* was rejected.

The resource person indicated that in cases like this, the matter should be referred to the magistrate who will try to help the members of the family and the executor to reach an agreement acceptable to all the parties concerned. If they cannot agree, the magistrate makes a determination on the distribution of the property according to the guidelines given above.

To complete the round of discussions on the executor, the resource person explained

that the executor does not receive any pay. However, he or she may claim from the estate any expenses that are incurred to fulfill the duties of an executor. Upon the approval of the plan, the court then gives the executor the power to distribute the property after the taxes are paid.²⁰

The final question of the day concerned a man who had both a civil law marriage and a customary law marriage. The resource person related that it is against the law for a man to register a marriage with one woman under the customary law and with another woman under civil law. He commits the crime of bigamy if he does so. If he wants more than one wife, then both women must be married under the customary law. If the customary law wife was married first and her marriage was registered, the civil law wife will be recognized as a second customary law wife and will be able to inherit from the deceased estate. However, if the civil law wife was married first, the customary law wife will not be recognized as a wife and will not be able to inherit anything. The general law applies.²¹

Lessons from the Inheritance Workshop

The writer gleaned the following nuggets of wisdom from the inheritance workshops:

- (a) Empowerment carries an incredibly high return. Participants appear more confident, energetic, and productive. The ability to improve their outlook on life gave them a sense of confidence in their future and that of their children.
- (b) Empowerment caused the widows to take pride in their personal appearance.
- (c) They became more confident and asserted their roles as leaders in their families.

²⁰Ibid., 12.

²¹Ibid., 13.

- (d) They were able to initiate discussions and articulate ideas based on their peculiar needs.
- (e) They became more intuitive and eagerly shared ideas with sister widows.
- (f) Repeated requests for contact with the Legal Resources Foundation as well as the Women and Law in Southern Africa Research Trust were made, where individual advice will be given on the merit of each problem
- (g) Disappearance of the initial hesitation and resistance to participate in the project.
- (h) The idea that writing a will is an indication that death is imminent was no longer a frightening prospect for the widows.
- (I) They were disabused of the idea that the magistrate's court is hostile territory.
- (j) What this writer considers to be the most important lesson of this particular segment of the project is that, despite the overwhelming enthusiasm displayed by the widows, each person has peculiar and very personal needs, which require undivided attention. One size does not fit all.
- (k) Widows in the focus groups were advised to regularly keep in touch with one another, and if need be, form support circles in which problems connected with inheritance would be aired and discussed. They must be able to talk about their frustrations and difficulties in learning with others, who are experiencing similar difficulties, so that they can support each other and jointly learn new ways of dealing with difficulties.
- (l) For the purposes of continuity and sustainability, leadership of the interfaith community was persuaded to establish their own ministries that should take care

of the needs of the widows and orphans.

The Gospel of Matthew 11:1, "After Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples, he went on from there to teach and preach in the towns of Galilee," encapsulates all that Jesus did, here on earth, and also gives a clear and unequivocal orders as to what is expected of men and women in ministry. Perambulating the aisle of the sanctuary and the corridors of the church building, is familiar territory which carries very little or no risks. It is when one ventures out into the "towns in Galilee," where faith can be rejected outright, unfamiliar territory becomes hostile, and faith comes face to face with vicissitudes of life, that is unexpected changes in circumstances or fortune, then the evaluation of one's actions becomes moot.

This writer believes that it is when one succeeds in leading the "dogs to eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table," that one can talk of success. Indeed, the lessons learnt from the project and reactions from the widows are without any shadow of doubt, indicative of a positive outcome.²²

The writer believes success is an illusive creature and therefore uses that word sparingly. This stance is confirmed by William James:

Take the happiest man, the one most envied by the world, and in nine cases out of ten his inmost consciousness is one of failure. Either his ideal in the line of his achievements are pitched far higher than the achievements, or else he has secret ideals of which the world know nothing, and in regard to which he inwardly knows himself to be found wanting. When such a conquering optimist as Goethe can express himself in this wise, how must it be with less successful men?

An Overview: Cacophony of Voices

A careful study of the survey report brought to the forefront a cacophony of voices, a catharsis as it were. Put it together one hears cries of lamentation, foreboding - as if from

²²Matthew 15:27 (New Revised Standard Version).

Macedonia. The people in the ministry setting describe such a situation *mvengenge*, a mixture of several unequal factors that might result in disaster. It is the time when people in the focus group as well as the larger community are reeling under the yokes of disease, poverty, impoverished living conditions, hopelessness, economic strangulation and political turmoil. They have become querulous, doubting “from whence help would come?” The scripture text which provides the much-needed panacea is taken from the first chapter of the book of Colossians, the third letter written by Paul from prison in Rome, which focuses on the supremacy of God in Christ:

He is the image of the invisible God, the first born over all creation. For by him and all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the first born from among the dead; so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.²³

The opening statement that Christ is “the image of the invisible God” affirms, not that Jesus is a copy of God, but that Jesus is the manifestation of God’s being. God has revealed the God-self through God’s creation, and the phrase “first born of all creation” points to Christ’s supremacy over creation. The creation is clear: all things were created in, through, and for Jesus.

“All things” includes all kinds of powers, both celestial and earthly. A confirmation of the fact that God, through Christ, is not only in charge but also fully in control in human affairs. Christ’s preeminence is again affirmed in (1:17). Jesus existed “before all things”, which means that they all cohere in him. The statement that Christ is “the beginning” balances the sentiments in verse 15a. The echo of another Jewish affirmation

²³Colossians 1: 15-20 (New Revised Standard Version).

reminds us that Christ's activity in reconciliation is coherent with his work in creation: the two belong together.²⁴

This writer is aware that the Resurrection Ministry, which is the project incorporating other activities at the ministry setting, may not be the only source of panacea for the widows and orphans impacted by the HIV/AIDS menace. At best the project is able to create further awareness of information that could be sourced in relation to inheritance under the customary process; how such information could be appropriated to the benefit of the widows; and existing institutions in the community that could be approached for assistance, as well as the danger in promiscuity, and casual unprotected sexual behavior.

This writer believes the project is a catalyst in helping people redefine their cultural practices in the light of ecclesiology by emphasizing the fact that it does not matter how hard we try, the issue of HIV/AIDS will be with us for a long time to come. Furthermore, this writer believes the project helps deepen the capacity of the various congregations to focus on individual needs of the people concerned, without diluting the basis of the gospel truth.

Karl Barth eloquently corroborate this notion, "To proclaim the gospel means, to utter and cause to be heard in the world with no less distinctness than many other things.....the existence of the living Jesus Christ yesterday, today and tomorrow."²⁵

This writer has learned to wait on the will of the Lord, who called him to come and labor in his vineyard in consonance with what Paul said in his first letter to the believers

²⁴*Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible*, eds. James D. G. Dunn and John W. Rogerson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2005), 1406.

²⁵*Karl Barth: Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Reconciliation*, eds. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance (New York, NY: T. & T Clark International, 2004), 845.

in Corinth: "I planted the seed, Apollo watered it, but God made it grow. The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labor. For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building."²⁶

Karl Barth adds his voice to this concept of true ownership of success thusly:

"It is not in the power of the community to produce or even to reproduce the divine historical fact. Nor is it in its power to disclose it. It lives itself by the fact that God has created and reveals it, that He is actively and eloquently present in it. Yet it does not lie in its power, in the power which it is given, to receive with human ear and heart and reason the Gospel which has his divine historical fact as its content, and to declare it with the human means at his disposal, thus introducing the human historical fact which corresponds to it and setting it alongside and over against everything else which takes place in the world.....No more is demanded that that it should actually make use of what is humanly possible with all its energies and in a way appropriate to the cause in hand. Finally, it need have no anxiety concerning the success of its witness. Its Lord rules; its own task is to serve Him."²⁷

Transformation through Empowerment

"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God - what is good and acceptable and perfect."²⁸

In an exercise like this, one may be tempted to arrogate to oneself certain attributes that may have contributed to the transformation that is taking place in the lives of the widows in the interfaith communities in Harare, Mbare, Mabvuko, and Chitungwiza. Nothing could be further from the truth. This writer is of the opinion that the desired transformation that is taking place in the designated communities, has come about because, as John Wesley said in his sermon entitled, "The Good Steward, God's grace is

²⁶1Corinthians 3: 6-9.

²⁷Karl Barth: *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Reconciliation*, 844.

²⁸Romans 12:2.

identified as the power of His Holy Spirit, which alone worketh in us all that is acceptable in his sight.”²⁹

Wesley was equally clear that the Holy Spirit should be seen as fully personal, not merely a force or energy in our lives.³⁰ For Wesley, then, the Holy Spirit is the restored personal Presence of God in our lives, empowering us. Wesley’s assumption about the purpose of the spirit’s Presence was explicit and consistent - “the Holy Spirit’s power enables us to become holy; in other words, to love and serve God, as were intended.”³¹

The final step in any transformative change process is to internalize the new concept that leads to a new behavior. If the behavior fits the rest of the personality and is congruent with the expectations of the persons involved in the process, the behavioral change becomes a stable part of the person(s) and eventually of the group, as is in the case of the widows.

The writer gave careful thoughts about the desired outcomes. In most change programs, it is almost the case that one may want the entire group to adopt a new way of thinking and behaving. Thus, the training should be geared to groups, and not to individuals.³²

In order to make it possible for participants in the seminar maintain their sense of independence, accountability and self-esteem, this writer stated clear goals, but

²⁹*John Wesley's Sermons: An Anthology*, ed. Albert C. Outer (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994), 419.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 420.

³¹Randy Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology*, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1944), 120.

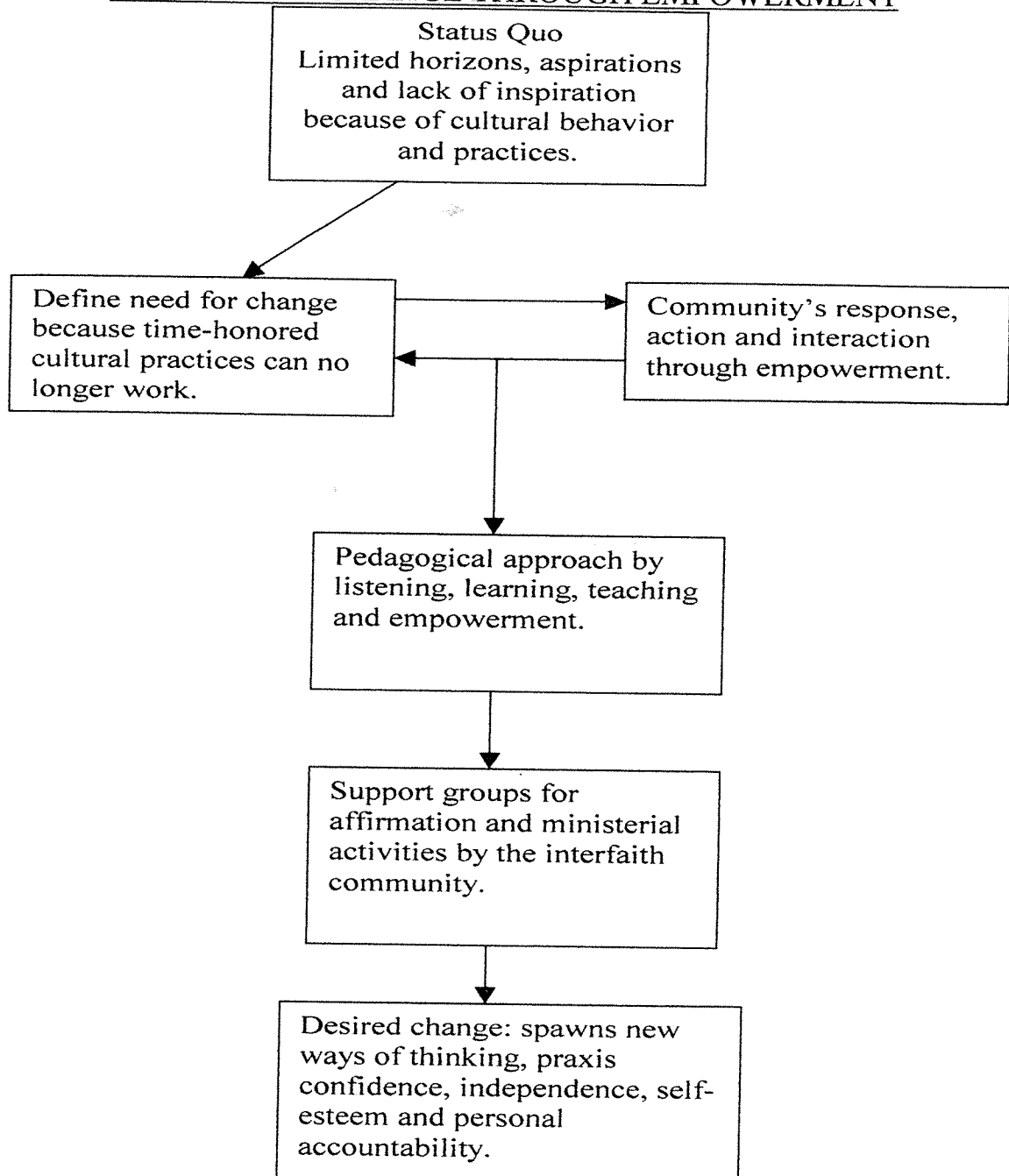
³²Edgar H. Schein, *The Corporate Culture: Survival Guide*, (San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass, 1999), 63-64.

encouraged the widows to develop their own solutions in the light of their own expectations and needs. Almost all such programs involve creating temporary learning system in which some new assumptions are learned and tested. It is too painful to give up a shared assumption in favor of an unknown substitute. If participants of the group can learn an alternative way of handling their affairs about the inheritance system, for instance, and if the alternative can be shown to work, then there is less anxiety as the alternative is gradually introduced into the rest of the community.³³

All these transformational programs have in common is that the leaders, in their respective ministerial activities of the interfaith community, consciously sustain them and know that period of disequilibrium are anticipated as a normal part of the community's engagement in ministry, rather than as painful disruptions. The interfaith communities cannot learn anything new if the leaders themselves do not open themselves to new ideas and challenges. The following diagrammatic plan demonstrates the process of transformation that is expected to occur in the widows and orphans in the Resurrection Ministry. Transformation is not guaranteed, but it is a greatly desired outcome.

³³Ibid.

DIAGRAM OF CHANGE THROUGH EMPOWERMENT



CHAPTER V

REFLECTIONS, SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The writer acknowledges that this project is not an end in itself. It is only one small step and catalyst that should aid the interfaith community in Zimbabwe to do even greater things to glorify God through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. With this in mind, the writer re-visits the ministry issue of the widows and orphans who are affected by HIV/AIDS with hopes that other faith communities will undertake the task of developing ministries that will imbue a sense of belonging-ness and wholeness to this overlooked group of persons.

This writer reiterates the postulation that the church has a theoretical calling to intervene in the cultural context and to re-appropriate cultural symbols in salvific ways for the benefit of all of God's people - HIV/AIDS persons and non-HIV/AIDS persons. In the exercise of its vocation to be the gathered community of God, the church must allow all voices to be heard, especially the voices of the widows and orphans in Zimbabwe who have been impacted by HIV/AIDS. The church must endeavor to construct a theology that is both reassuring and liberating. Theological reflection on issues of sexuality and impact of unequal gender relations in an HIV-positive world is urgently required in Zimbabwe. The same approach of theological reflection must be represented in the lives of orphans who suffer as survivor-victims of this pandemic.

The twenty-first century faith community in Zimbabwe has failed to replace puberty rites and initiation ceremonies (traditional training schools for the youth) where life-skills

including matters of sexuality, personal hygiene, self-defense, and home economics were mentored by *vanasekuru* and *vanambuya*. The church in Zimbabwe should recalibrate its actions and assume a unique place where it can provide essential support, education and training to both parents and young people alike.

The Christian faith provides rich symbols and rituals that can be appropriated and reinterpreted in order to engender redemption to widows and others living with HIV.¹ The celebration of the Eucharist becomes a reminder to the faith community that even in the face of death, there is still life. Widows shamed by their HIV-positive status can be empowered to hold fast to the belief that God does not abandon them. However, they are not always assured that the church stands in solidarity with them.

There has been no more urgent time for the church and the interfaith community to define its existentiality and mission in an HIV-positive world. Issues of widowhood, sexuality, culture, inheritance, and tradition lie at the heart of what it means to be a Christian community in this context.² At the center of this understanding, eloquently put by Jesus in Mark 12: 29-31, is the idea of loving God with one's entire being, and one's neighbor as oneself. Dietrich Bonhoeffer succinctly summarizes this theme of love:

- . Christian love is not a human possibility. It is not to be equated with humanitarian ideas of affection and sympathy.
- . Christian love is possible only through faith in Christ and through the work of the Holy Spirit. We are to surrender our will to Christ and make no claim on God or our neighbor.
- . The Christian loves the real neighbor. This is a significant point. The Christian loves another human, not because that person acts as a "thou" and makes the Christian experience God's claim in the neighbor but not to the concrete "thou". We are not to love God in the neighbor, but the neighbor in himself or herself.

¹Emmanuel Katonge, "Christian Ethics and AIDS in Africa Today", in *Missionalia* 29 (2001): 159.

²Isabel Phiri, "Doing Theology in Community: The Case of African Women Theologians in the 1990's" in *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 99 (1997), 69-76.

This has an individual social reference. We are not to love the neighbor in God's place or to love the neighbor rather than ourselves.³

Without a major reassessment of how they are being undermined theologically and practically with church structures, those who are marginalized will continue to feel abandoned. The writer's hope for the church resounds with assurance that the faith community will rise up and practice an all-encompassing love that knows no bounds.

Vignettes of Unfinished Business in the Communities

Persons in the focus groups at the ministry setting who participated in the research project and workshops are talking. Persons in the larger community are expressing their views about widows and orphans impacted by HIV/AIDS. The clergy, who by virtue of what they do, and, regularly encountered widows and adolescent orphans, are also talking. However, none of these conversations occurs in open forums. Concerned senior citizens, who by way of their wisdom and experience and who have interacted with people in various encounters in their lives, have registered their anxiety over a number of things that are happening in the community.

The truth of the matter is that this writer is unable to process all the information that he received from the implementation of the ministry project for very good reasons. Firstly, it is because of the enormity of the issues at stake. Secondly, it is virtually impossible to process all the things that he learned. Financial and logistical matters placed limitations on the writer. Additionally, the issues that appeared during the implementation of the project and the administration of the survey raised many questions that require further study and necessary action. Having said that, the author believes that it is reasonable to highlight some of the things people are talking about in the interfaith

³J. Deotis Roberts, *Bonhoeffer and King: Speaking Truth to Power* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 50.

community and in the larger community setting.

Some widows impacted by HIV/AIDS in the focus group find themselves in a quandary. These widows are comparatively young and desire sexual intimacy in their lives. Their concern is what to do in their day-to-day contact with men, who express a desire and interest to enter into conjugal relationship with them.

Sexual activity is a very private part of life. It is not very easy to influence sexual behavior. The Government of Zimbabwe through the Legislature attempts to govern intimate behavior. It has enacted a law (Sexual Offences Act, Chapter 9:21) which makes it a very serious offence for a person who knows that she or he has the HIV virus to do anything that might spread it to another person. This means that if she or he knows they are HIV positive or have AIDS, this person may not have unprotected sex with another who is not infected, unless that person knows the other party has the virus and has agreed to have sexual activity. It is a crime, even if the other person is one's husband or a wife. If you break this law, you can be charged and could be sent to prison for a maximum period of 20 years.⁴

This undeniably brings into sharp focus the need to educate the congregation in matters related to sexuality, HIV/AIDS and the law. The writer suggests the two ministry endeavors that could be utilized by the twenty-first century interfaith communities in Zimbabwe as they attempt to create dialogue about sexuality, HIV/AIDS and the law, especially for the widows and orphans who have directly suffered impact from the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

⁴Legal Resources Foundation, *Know Your Rights: HIV/AIDS and the Law*, (Harare, Zimbabwe: Printforce Productions WO 41/84, March 2005).

Nurture Ministry

The mission of a nurture ministry is to support the spiritual development and growth of the church and the community by providing programs and services focused on care and training. An effective nurture ministry works to accomplish the following:

1. Insuring that "spiritual discipleship" is practiced church wide;
2. Offering training in spiritual gifts for all parishioners;
3. Evaluating and training children and youth;
4. Developing programs in aid of improving effectiveness and efficiency;
5. Providing visitation to members of the congregation who are homebound, hospitalized, and/or in nursing and personal care homes;
6. Functioning as liaison between the church and those who are homebound and
7. Employing the spiritual disciplines of prayer, fasting, fellowship and humility.⁵

Strategic Alliance Ministry

A second enterprise that might prove invaluable is the establishment of a Strategic Alliance Ministry (SAM).⁶ The mission for SAM is to enhance the quality of life and extend long-term survival for people living with HIV through treatment, education, advocacy and access to contemporary therapies.

The vision of SAM focuses on lobbying the governmental agencies, legislators, opinion movers in the larger community, and human rights organizations such as the United Nations, the World Health Organization, the diplomatic corps of Southern Africa and the media, to ensure that screening for HIV becomes part of the routine battery of

⁵John 15: 4-5, "Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing."

⁶Proverbs 13: 20, "Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools suffers harm."

medical tests. Under this recommendation, HIV screening would be offered as a standard test, much like testing for high blood pressure, hypertension, diabetes, tuberculosis, malaria, to name but few.

Another possibility for SAM may be seeking help for teenage mothers impacted by HIV/AIDS from the Georgia Campaign for Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention (GCAPP).⁷ Early contact with the Clinton Foundation may be useful. The Clinton Foundation has announced that two pharmaceutical companies in India have agreed to supply drugs for 100,000 HIV-positive children, at prices as low as sixteen cents a day or less than \$60 a year in sixty-two countries.⁸

SAM may also network with the Food and Drug Administration and seek information about the recent approval of the drug called Atripla. The approval of Atripla, a drug for HIV infected persons, is expected to help improve and lengthen their lives. Taking just one pill a day will simplify medication for patients who now have to remember to take them two to fifteen pills a day.⁹

Conclusion

It is with honor and sobriety that the writer extends his deep-set appreciation and unqualified gratitude to all persons; individually and groups who in diverse ways contributed immeasurably to the present status of the project. Any omission, diversions, equivocations, factual and historical errors that may be detected in this dissertation is entirely the sole responsibility of this writer.

The challenge, was first and foremost, to find succor for the widows and orphans, in

⁷GCAPP is a non-profit organization founded by Jane Fonda and is located in Atlanta, Georgia.

⁸Julie Gerberding, Director of the United States Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDCP) announced this initiative at a press conference in Atlanta, Georgia in June 12, 2006.

⁹Atlanta Journal Constitution, December 1, 2006.

the interfaith communities of Harare, Mbare, Mabvuko and Chitingwiza, who have been impacted by HIV/AIDS, focusing on inheritance under the customary process, and at the same time to look for assistance in aid of the *personae miserabiles*. Attempts were made to establish mutual trust between the project team and the persons in the focus group, and, help them understand and experience God's presence in their lives even in the midst of their circumstances.

The objective was, and still is, that through the collective action by this writer and his collaborators, a process of transformation would be set apace and occur in the widows and orphans through the Resurrection Ministry. Once again, this writer wishes to place on record that transformation is not guaranteed, albeit desired.

To this end, participants were instructed in scriptures and methods of daily devotions. Their testimony is that their daily prayer life had been of the greatest benefit in improving their wellness.

Having said that, it must also be noted that the larger community continues to grapple with issues relevant to inheritance. In certain social groups in Africa and particularly in Zimbabwe, disputes pertaining to inheritance are still adjudicated under the same customary laws that tend to uphold fossilized customs and, thus perpetuate the sorry plight of women. In others, attempts are boldly made through the introduction of necessary laws and announcements of existing ones to rectify issues and ensure that beneficiaries - the widows, the children, the parents and the family - have due share of the property on the death of the "paterfamilias."

However, full optimism cannot even be expressed here since the unwritten customary law often sways the practice and consequently the judgment in a concrete

situation. The challenge is therefore, to sustain the tempo of change and to check the excesses of those traditionalists and family heads that may resent any change in the custom of inheritance.

Here Christians can do more than they hitherto have done. Since illiteracy has contributed in no small measure in perpetuating this custom, parents and husbands should be encouraged in our literate age to leave a documented will or testament written to ensure the equitable distribution of family property when they are no longer there.

The church and society cannot afford to ignore the hard conditions under which a widow subsists after the death of her husband or the plight of a child who is made to depend on the male heir. In a male dominated structure, their fate is uncertain in the hands of the *babamudiki*'s (younger brother of the late husband) who exercises his whims and caprices. If the heir is callous, the widow and her children, especially in a polygamous marriage, experience untold hardships and unwarranted subjugation. The problems are compounded if the widow refuses marriage overtures by the heir or to live in concubinage with him. One of the solutions is to help the widow protected and help her to become self-reliant.

Yahweh's ruling in favor of the bereaved daughters of Zelophehad in the first Biblical petition for inheritance rights is one of the best optimistic for curbing family conflicts, insubordination, incessant litigation and, above all, for establishing the peace in any given kindred. Unfortunately, a number of daughters (widows) of Zimbabwe do not possess the courage or argumentation of the daughters of Zelophehad as they stood their ground before the ruling body of Israel. Those who do could, together with the leaders of the interfaith community, play the role of Moses on their behalf. Indeed, it is an urgent

duty for all to put up concerted efforts to check the affront on the rights of widows.¹⁰

¹⁰Delores S. Williams, "A Theology of Advocacy for Women", in *Women and Economic Justice Church and Society*, (Atlanta, GA: EBSCO Publishing, 2006), 4-84.

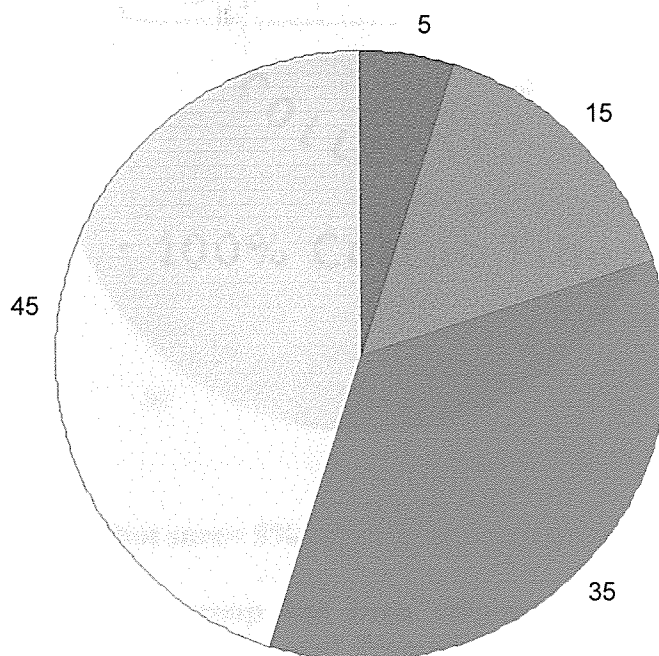
APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

PRE AND POST REPORTS ON HIV/AIDS AWARENESS SURVEY ON EDUCATION AND PREVENTION: VIEWS AND PERCEPTIONS AMONG WIDOWS IN THE INTERFAITH COMMUNITY OF HARARE, MBARE, MABVUKO AND CHITUNGWIZA

Do you know that HIV/AIDS is the number one killer in Zimbabwe?

Pre HIV/AIDS survey question 1

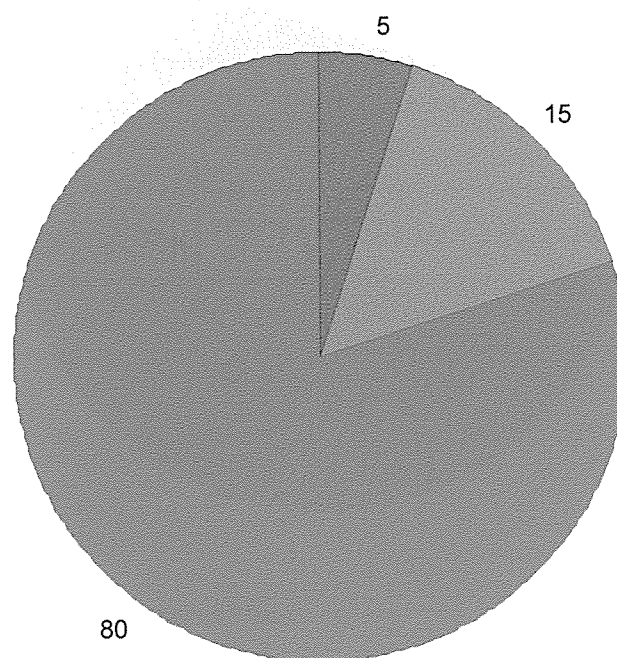


Yes= 45%, No= 35%, Not sure= 15%, Not proven=5%

Prior to the empowerment process respondents were in a state of denial and refused to acknowledge that HIV/AIDS was responsible for the death of their spouses and gave the disease various names other than its own.

Do you know that HIV/AIDS is the number one killer in Zimbabwe?

Post HIV/AIDS survey question 1

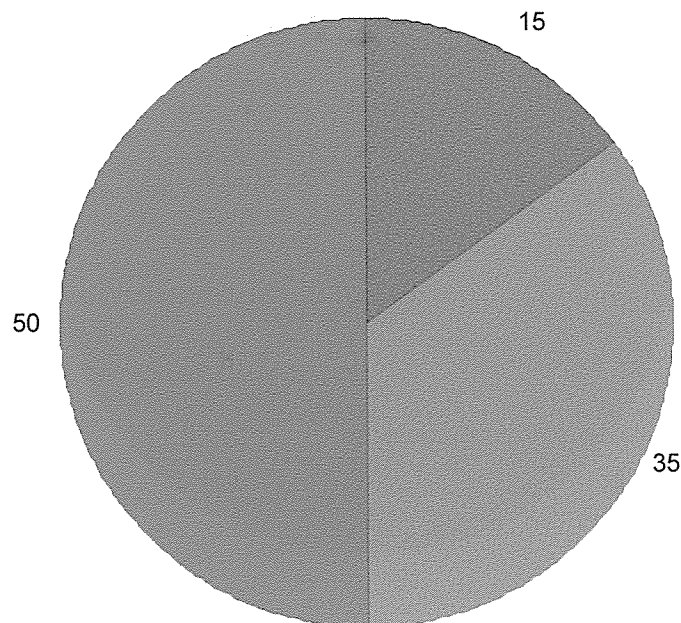


Yes= 80%, No=15%, Not sure= 5%

Note: Once the control group has been empowered, their perception and understanding of the disease changed dramatically. Hitherto people living with HIV/AIDS felt stigmatized and alienated by the community and they therefore kept to themselves. They did not even mention the disease by its proper name even though they had been victimized following the death of their spouses and children as a result of the disease.

Is there a need for HIV/AIDS awareness for education and prevention?

Pre HIV/AIDS survey question 2

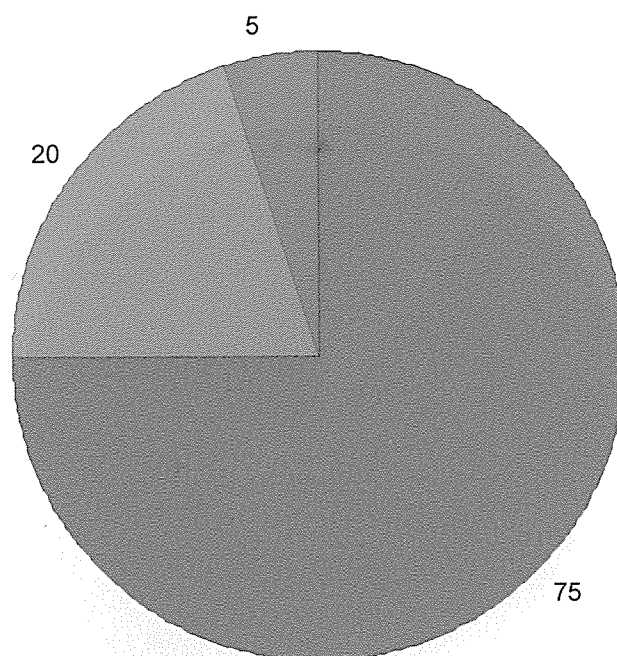


Yes= 50%, No=35%, Not sure= 15%

Because of negative self-talk including the erroneous belief that persons living with HIV/AIDS committed sin and therefore the disease is a punishment from God as retribution.

Is there a need for HIV/AIDS awareness in education and prevention?

Post HIV/AIDS survey question 2

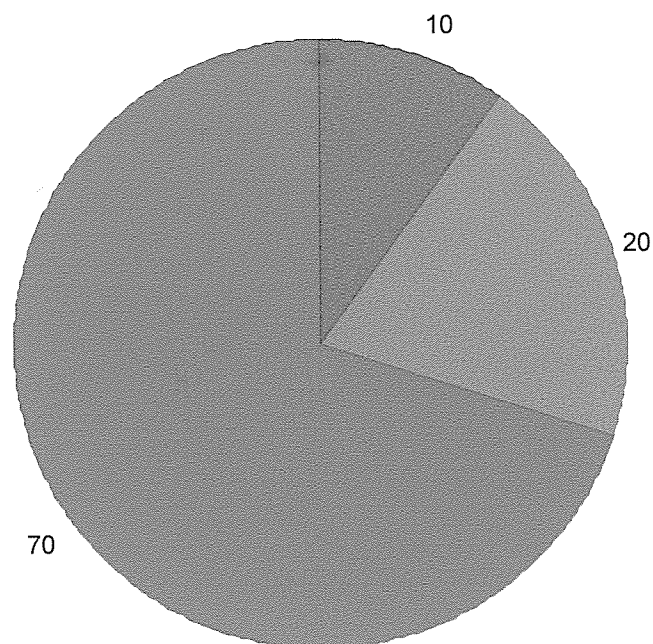


Yes= 75%, No= 20%, Not sure= 5%

Note: Once the control group has been empowered, the perception of the subject matter was changed for the better. Participants were exposed to scripture for the fact that, God through Christ, is on the side of the marginalized in the community; their pain is his pain.

Does your church promote HIV/AIDS education and prevention?

Pre HIV/AIDS survey question 3

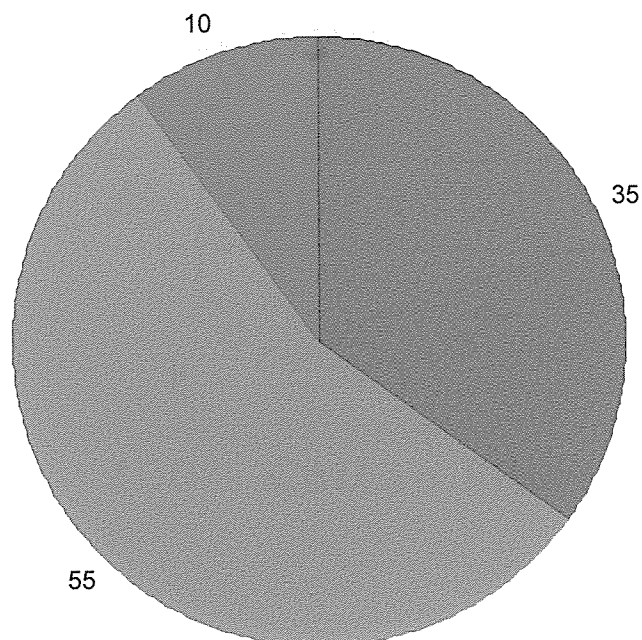


No=70%, Yes= 10%, Not sure=20%

The church did not consider it worth their while to talk too much about such a terrible disease, which has claimed so many lives needlessly.

Does your church promote HIV/AIDS education and prevention?

Post HIV/AIDS survey question 3

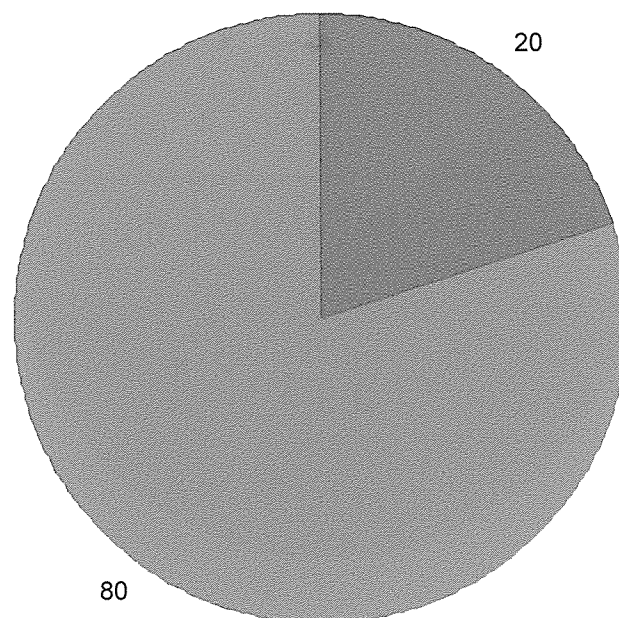


Yes = 55%, No = 35%, Not interested = 10%

After empowerment participants became more interested in the business of the church by asking questions as to why the leadership did not appear concerned about the subject matter.

Will you encourage your church to promote HIV/AIDS education and prevention?

Post HIV/AIDS question 4

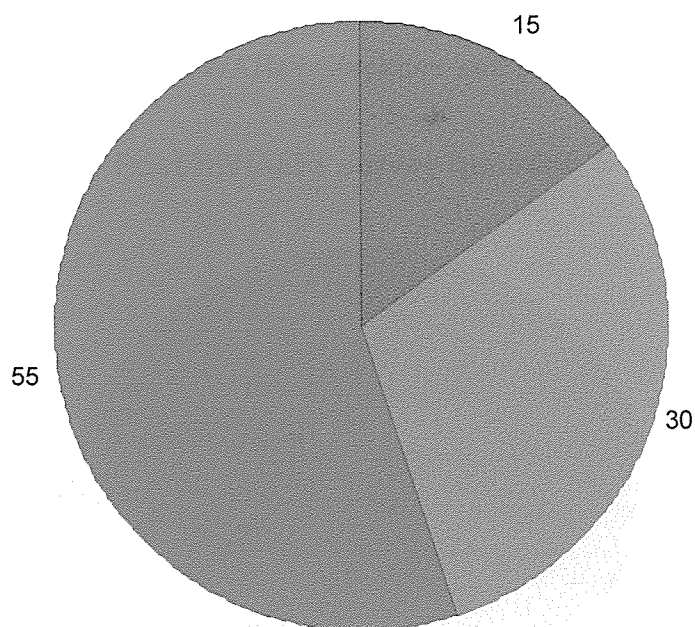


Yes= 80%, No=20%

Note: Once the control group has been empowered, the perception to both 3 and 4 above changed positively. The empowerment process did not only create the awareness for them to engage the church leadership to show more interest in subject matter, but took the initiative to make suggestions as to how solution could be found. Respondents believe their action may help to disabuse the perception within the ranks of some leaders in the church that all the people living with HIV/AIDS are promiscuous.

Would you participate in HIV/AIDS education and prevention?

Pre HIV/AIDS survey question 5

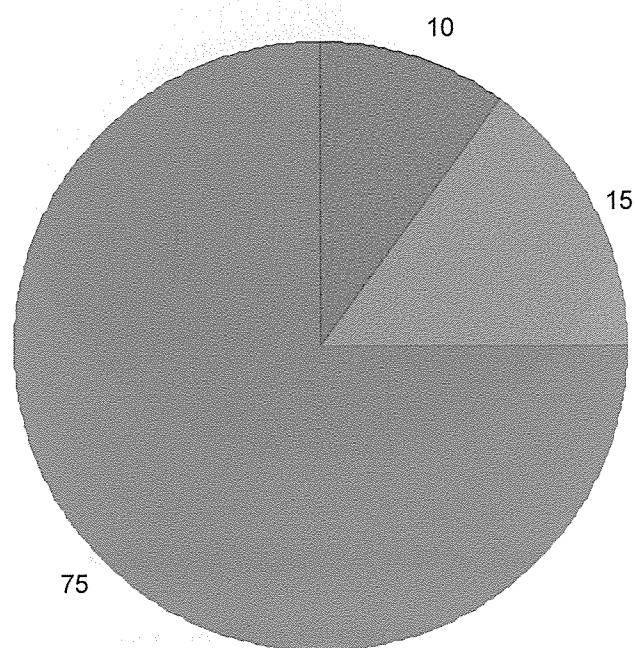


Yes= 55%, Not sure= 30%, No= 15%

Initially respondents did not see why they should be involved in HIVAIDS education because it was none of their business. They have enough trouble living with the disease. No need to meddle in the business of others.

Would you participate in HIV/AIDS education and prevention?

Post HIV/AIDS survey question 5

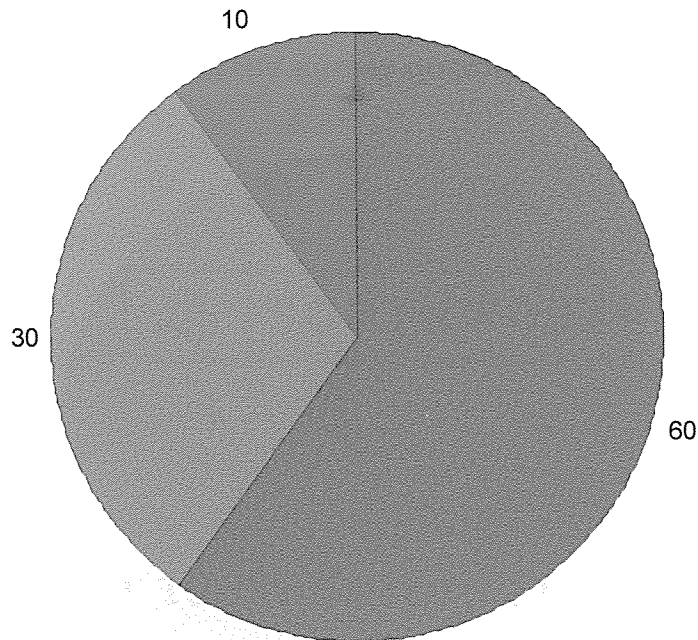


Yes=75%, Not sure=15%, No= 10%

Note: Once again after the empowerment of the control group perception about participation in education and prevention campaign changed dramatically for the better. However, those who were not sure dug in their heels.

How important is it for the church to provide HIV/AIDS education and prevention for members of the interfaith community who are married?

Pre HIV survey question 6

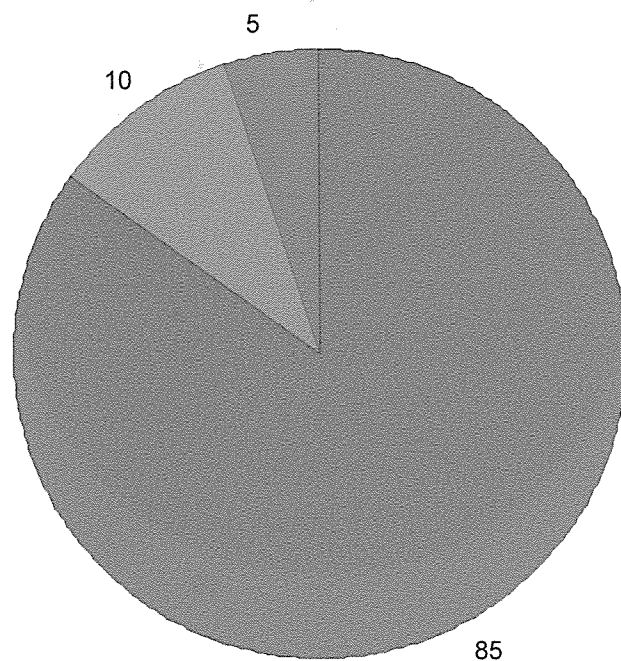


Not important = 60%, Somewhat important = 30%, Not sure = 10%

In view of their subordinate position in marriage relationships respondents did not think it was important for the church to educate married couples in the subject matter.

How important is it for the church to provide HIV/AIDS education and prevention for members of the interfaith community who are married?

Post HIV survey question 6

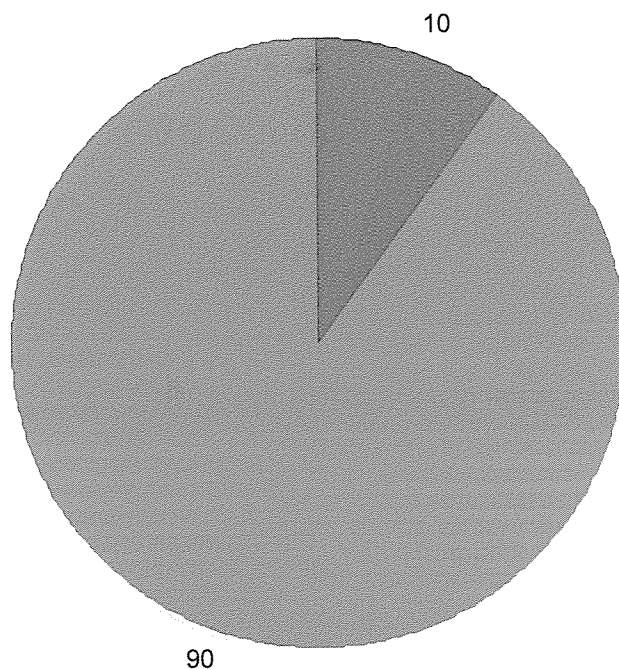


Very important= 85%, Not important=10%, Not sure= 5%

Note: After empowerment of the control group there was a marked improvement in perception about the subject matter. Respondents gained confidence and self-esteem ready to discuss any matter relevant their situation.

Would you advise your partner to use condom as part of HIV/AIDS education and prevention?

Pre HIV survey question 7

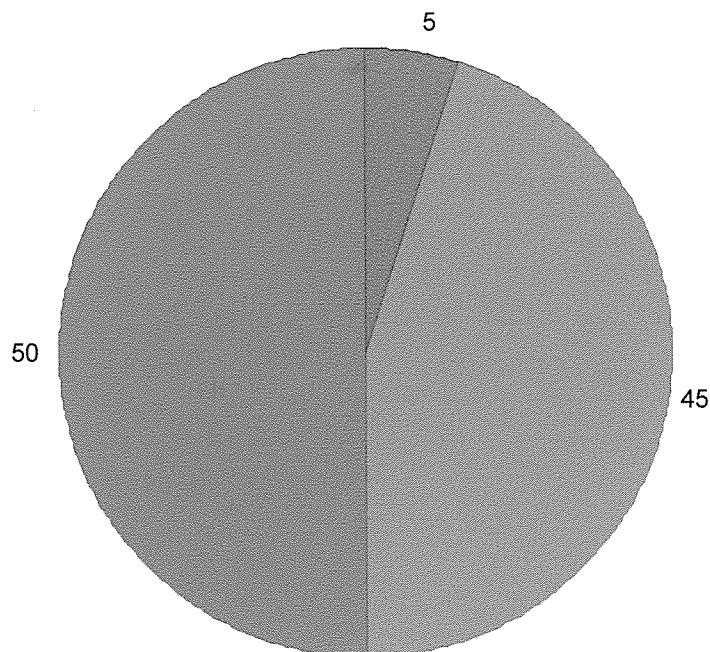


No = 90%, Yes = 10%

Demand for the use of condom by wives always breeds suspicion. Most men demand for sex with or without condom and their female partners would rather oblige and have peace in the home than ask for something that is sure to ignite a quarrel.

Would you advise your partner to use condom as part of HIV/AIDS education and prevention?

Post HIV/AIDS survey question 7

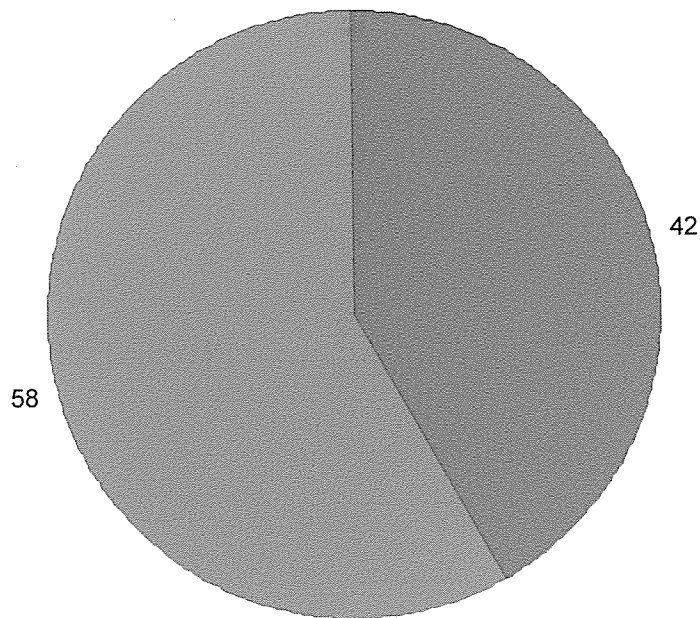


Yes= 50%, No= 45%, Not sure= 5%

Note: After the empowerment seminar, respondents were almost evenly split in their views about the issue at stake. It is patently clear to this researcher that the respondents still hold on to the belief that asking their partners to use a condom may provoke distrust and anger and perhaps jeopardize their chances of maintaining relationship. This presents one of the toughest challenges at the ministry setting. Consequently, the writer has made further recommendations in the chapter dealing with “Vignette of things hanging in the community.”

Do your religious beliefs go against the use of a condom - does it really matter?

Pre HIV/AIDS survey question 8

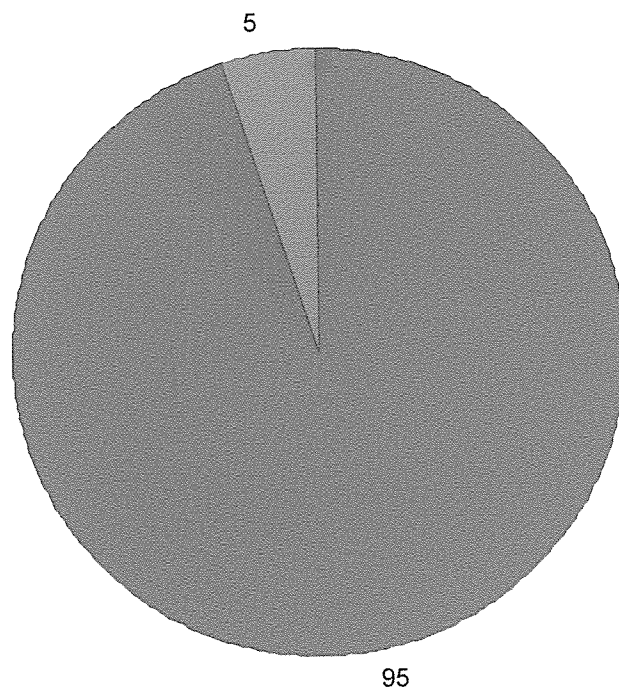


Yes= 58%, No= 42%.

Before the empowerment process some respondents had entertained the idea that it was against their religious beliefs to encourage the use of condom. Besides they did not have the courage to suggest to their male partners to use it.

Do your religious beliefs go against the use of condom- does it really matter?

Post HIV survey question 8

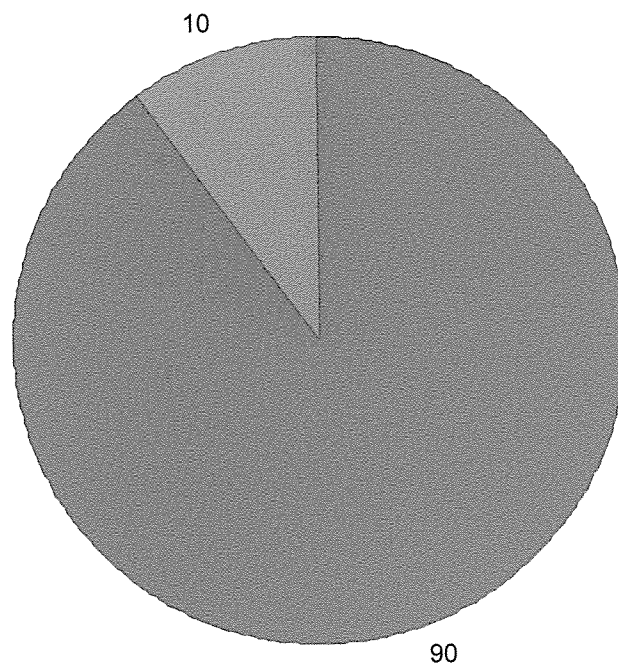


It does not matter= 95%, It does matter= 5%

After respondents were empowered at the seminar, they realized that the use of condom is not against their religious beliefs and that the use of the device rather helps to reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS. However, they were they were not sure whether their partners would welcome the idea.

Would you like your church to encourage people living with HIV/AIDS to share information about their condition with their partners?

Pre HIV survey question 9

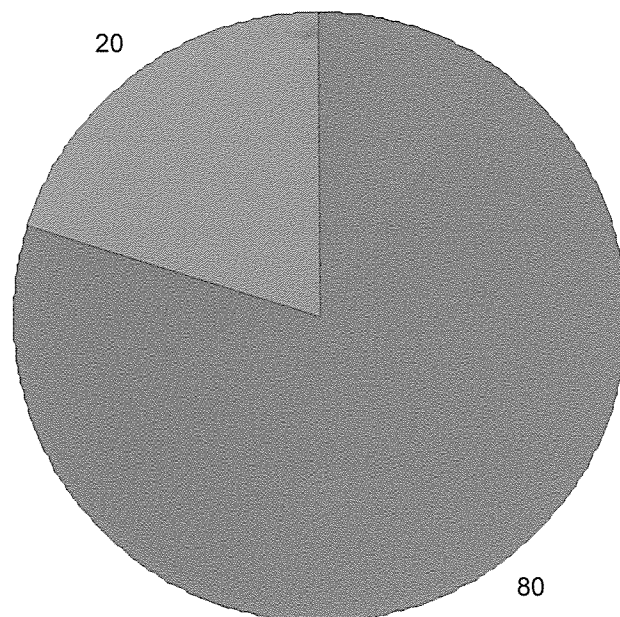


No = 90%, Yes = 10%

Respondents did not see the need for the church to meddle in their private affair. Respondents believed matters concerning HIV/AIDS were personal and sensitive.

Would you like your church to encourage people living with HIV/AIDS to share information about their condition with their partners?

Post HIV survey question 9

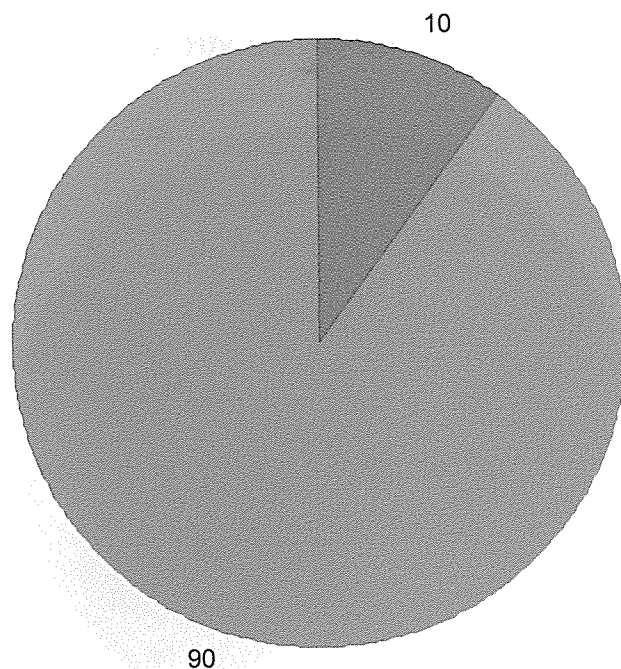


Yes = 80%, No= 20%

After the empowerment exercise respondents accepted the fact that even though issues concerning HIV may be sensitive, they are not private. The consequences of not letting a partner know that one is living with the disease are grave and may be liable for prosecution in the law courts.

How important is it for your church and the interfaith community to offer HIV/AIDS education and prevention for male members who are not married?

Pre HIV/AIDS survey question 10

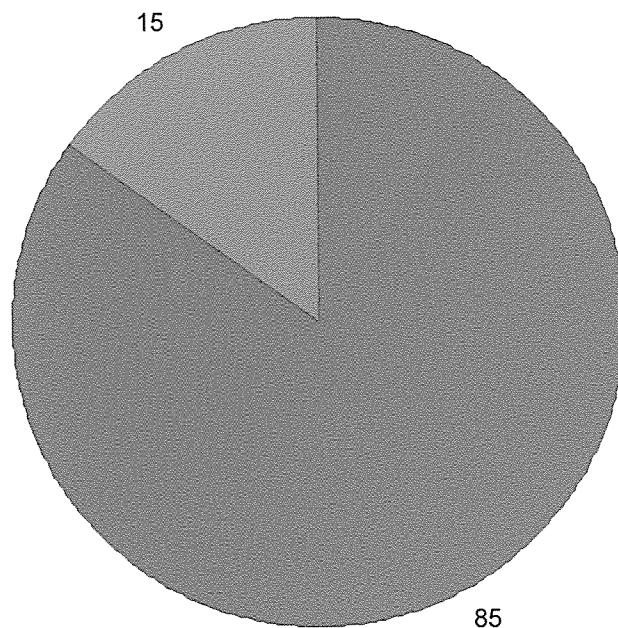


Not very important= 90%, Important= 10%

Note: Initially respondents were hesitant and not opening up, but as conversation with them warmed up, they began to chat more freely airing their views on the issues being researched.

How important is it for your church and the interfaith community to offer HIV/AIDS education and prevention for male members who are single?

Post HIV survey question 10

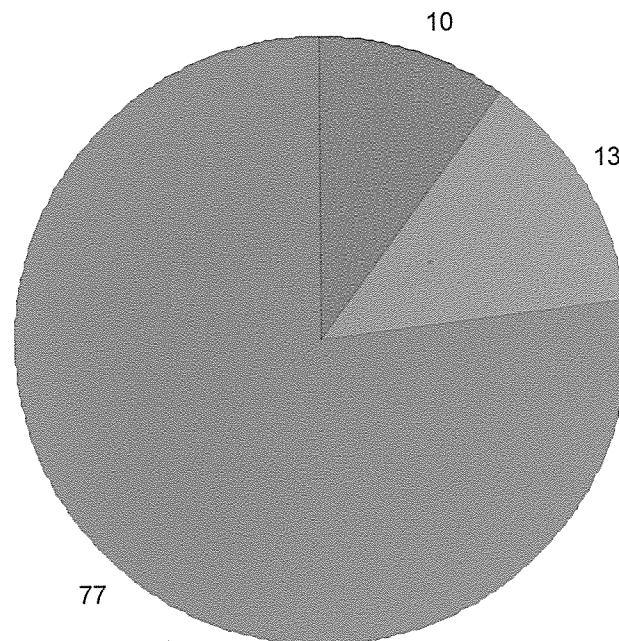


Very important = 85%, Not important = 15%

After the empowerment process respondents realized that the said males are their sons, brothers and future husbands whose interest should be uppermost in their thoughts and action. They were also reminded that in Christ there is no male or female.

Do you intend to share information on HIV/AIDS education and prevention with adults in your congregation?

Pre HIV/AIDS survey question 11

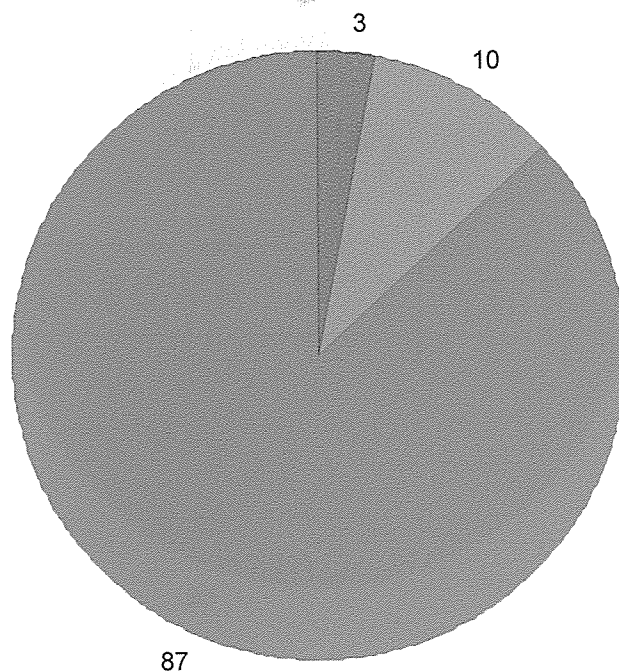


No = 77%, Yes =13%, Not sure=10%

Initially respondents were unwilling to discuss the subject matter with “strangers” who may betray the confidence they may repose in them.

Do you intend to share information on HIV/AIDS education and prevention with adults in your congregation?

Post HIV/AIDS survey question 11

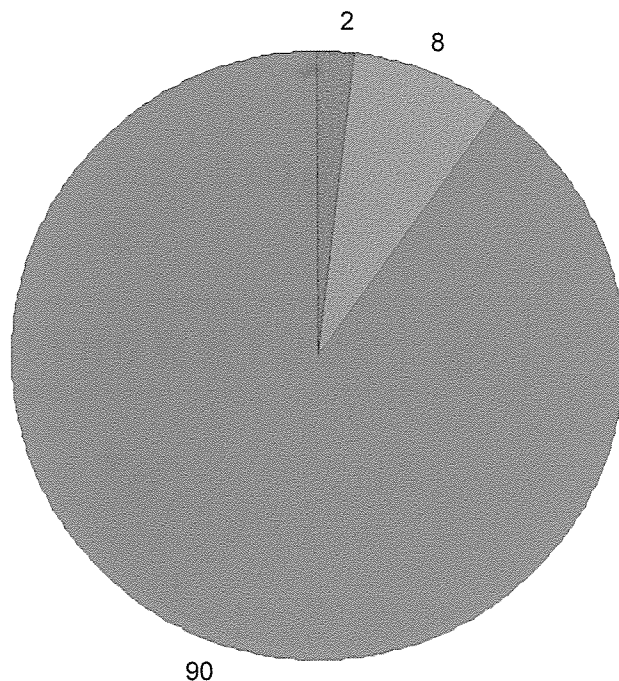


Yes= 87%, No= 10%, Not sure= 3%

Note: After empowerment the perception of respondents became more positive. It was obvious they have put behind them the misconception and bigotry of some members of the interfaith community concerning people living with the disease.

Do you intend to share information on HIV/AIDS prevention and education with adolescents in your congregation?

Pre HIV/AIDS survey question 12

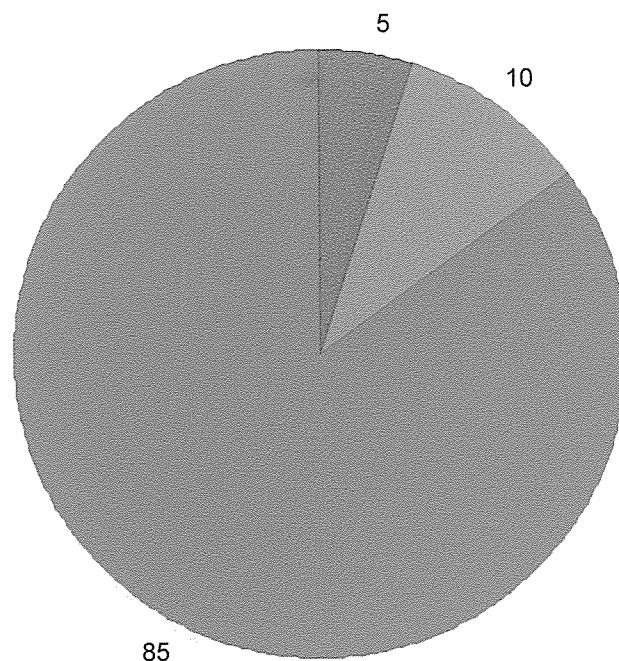


No = 90%, Yes = 8%, Not sure = 2%

In a real traditional African setting, it was the belief that a child is born into the village not the family. This implies that the welfare, nurture and care of children become the responsibility of the entire village. Children adhere to a long-standing system of respect for elders. It is no longer the case

Do you intend to share information on HIV/AIDS education and prevention with adolescents in your congregation if authorized to do so by the church?

Post HIV/AIDS survey question 12

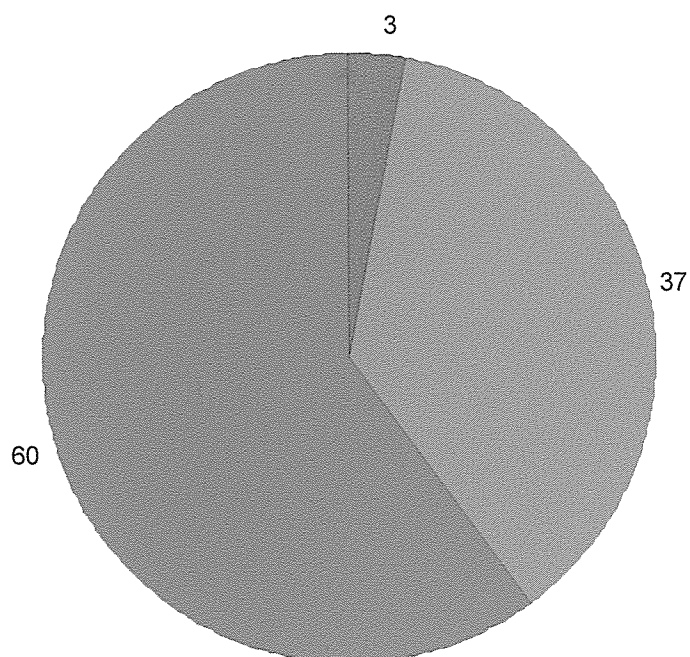


Yes = 85%, No = 5%, Not sure = 10%

Note: After empowerment, majority of respondents whose perception on the subject matter changed, believe that because of the sensitive nature of the disease, one needs approval from the church leadership to share any information at all on HIV/AIDS, especially to adolescents.

Do you think you can share information on HIV/AIDS education and prevention with your own children?

Pre HIV/AIDS survey question 13

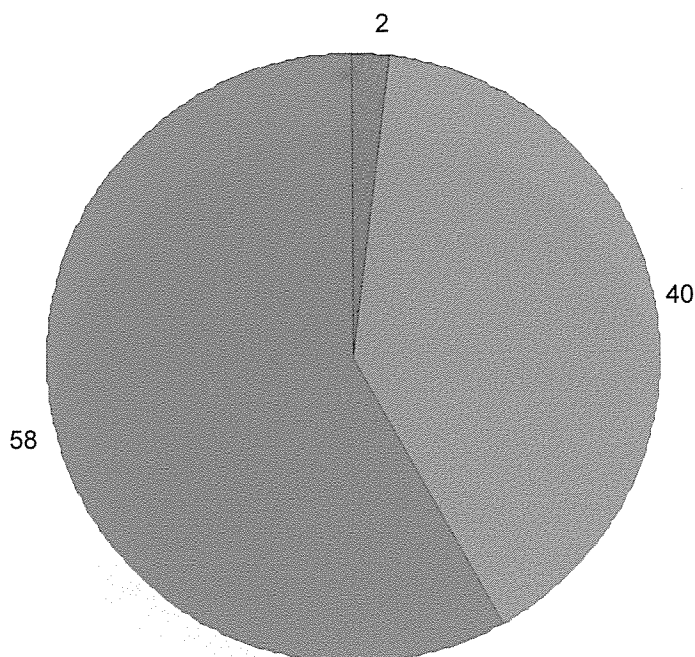


No = 60%, Yes = 37%, Not sure = 3%

Before the empowerment process respondents adhered to their cultural norms that did not allow parents to discuss such matters with their children.

Do you think you can share information on HIV/AIDS education and prevention with your own children?

Post HIV/AIDS survey question 13

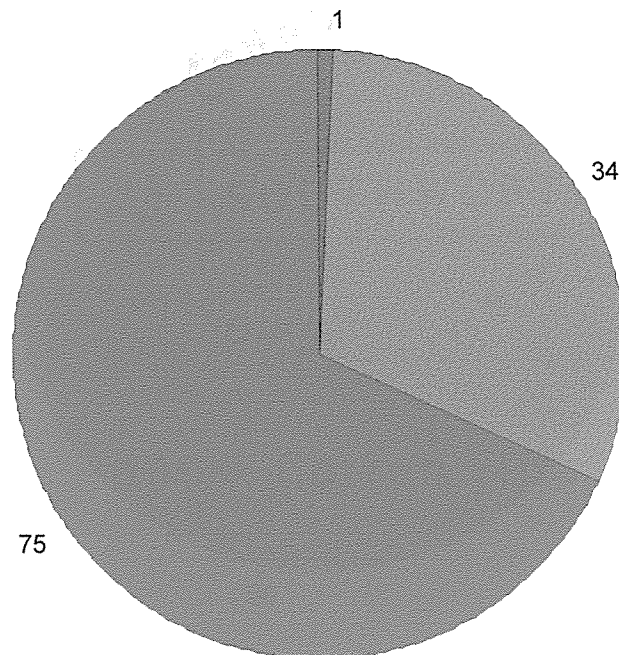


Yes = 58%, No = 40%, Not sure = 2%

Note: Even after empowerment, respondents still did not feel comfortable to discuss the subject matter with their children because they hold unto taboos which preclude the discussion of issues pertaining to sexuality, as such, with their children. The consensus on discussion of this matter is that, change may come but it takes time.

How important is it for the leadership of the interfaith community to provide information on HIV/AIDS education and prevention to the church?

Pre HIV/AIDS survey question 14

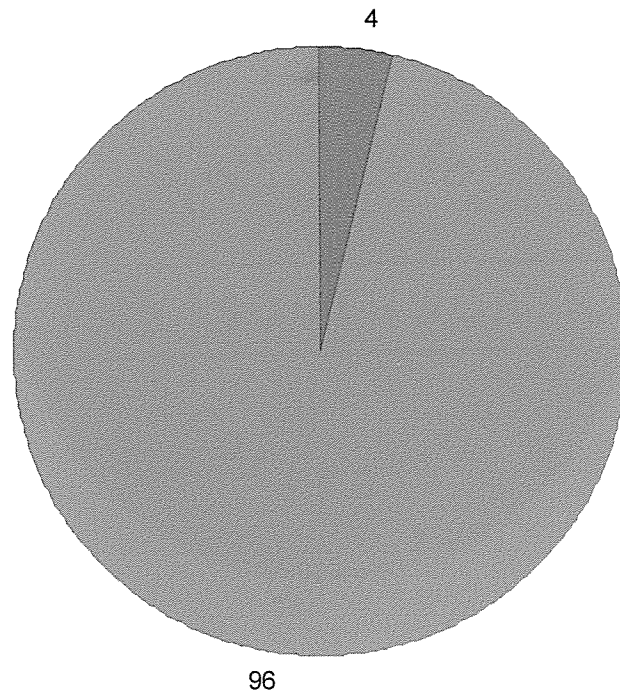


Very Important = 75%, Important = 34%, Slightly Important = 1%

Because of previous empowerment activities on similar topics, respondents showed a positive attitude on this matter right at the beginning.

How important is it for the leadership of the interfaith community to provide information on HIV/AIDS education and prevention to the membership?

Post HIV/AIDS survey question 14

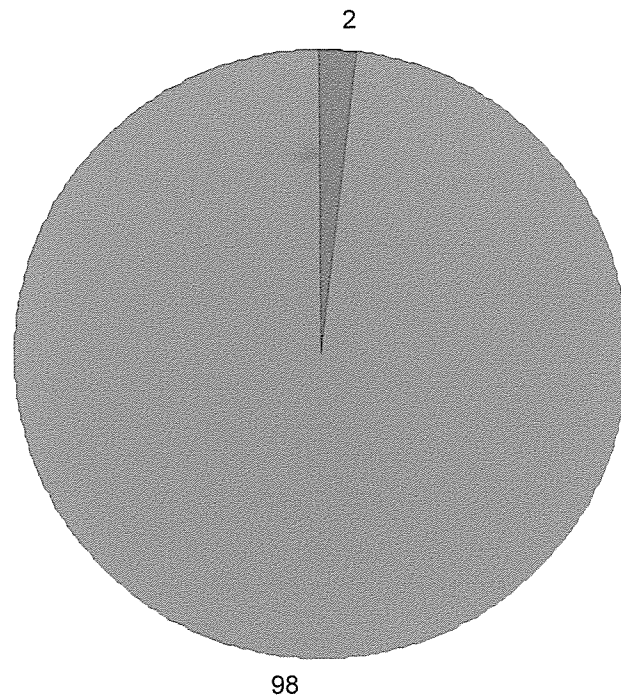


Very Important = 96%, Important = 4%

Note: Positive change was overwhelming after empowerment because the congregation looks up to the clergy and elected officials for direction in these matters.

Do cultural practices and beliefs impact on HIV/AIDS education and prevention?

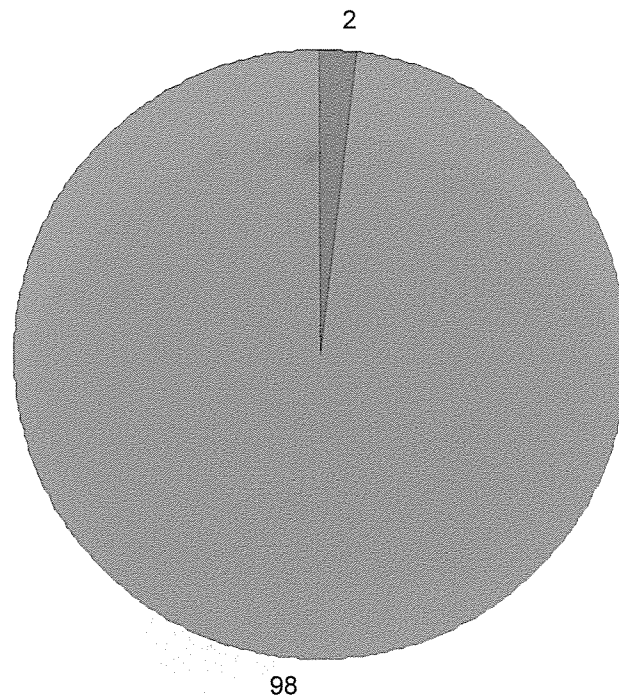
Pre HIV/AIDS survey question 15



Yes = 98%, No = 2%

Do cultural practices and beliefs impact on HIV/AIDS education and prevention?

Post HIV/AIDS survey question 15

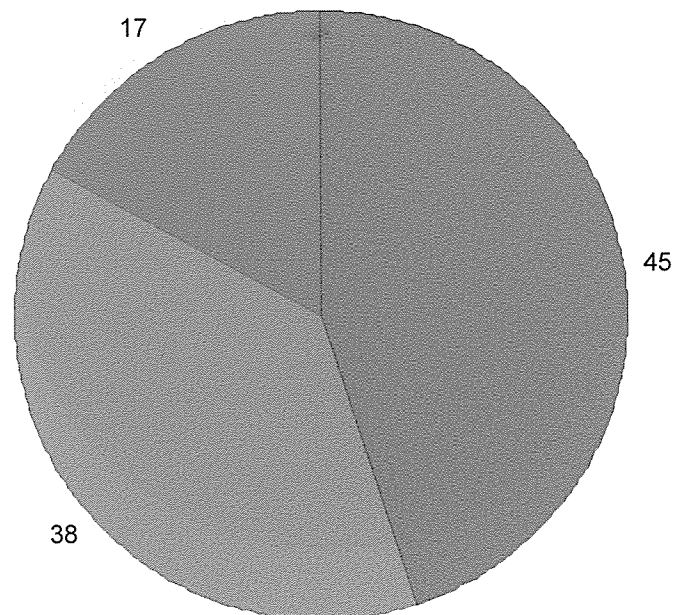


Yes = 98%, No = 2%

Note: No change of perception even after empowerment. Most participants believe that culture is important in their lives. They were born into the Zimbabwean culture in which they were nurtured and sustained.

Do you believe that being HIV-positive is a punishment for sins committed?

Pre HIV/AIDS survey question 16

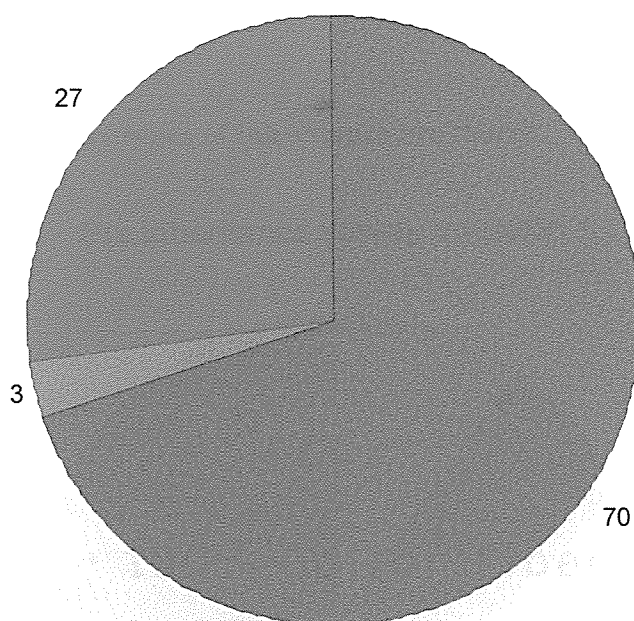


Yes = 38%, No = 45%, Not sure = 17%

Almost half of respondents either believe they were infected because of a curse or because of sins committed by their ancestors, that could be one of the reasons why they scarcely mentions HIV by its name.

Do you believe that being HIV-positive is punishment for sins committed?

Post HIV/AIDS survey question 16



No = 70%, Yes = 27%, Not sure = 3%

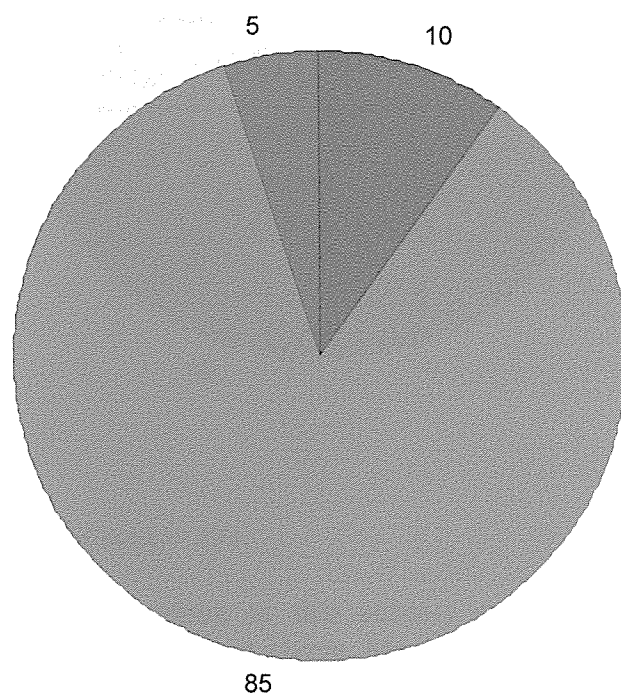
Note: There were marked change in perception after empowerment, even though it was not dramatic. Insruction through scripture helped to disbuse the idea that HIV infects oly those who have committed sin. God through Jesus Christ is frien and savior to all who believe in him, humanity has fallen short of the grace of God.

APPENDIX B

This section of the questionnaire covers matters concerning inheritance under the customary process.

Do you know how many types of inheritance are there?

Pre inheritance survey question 1

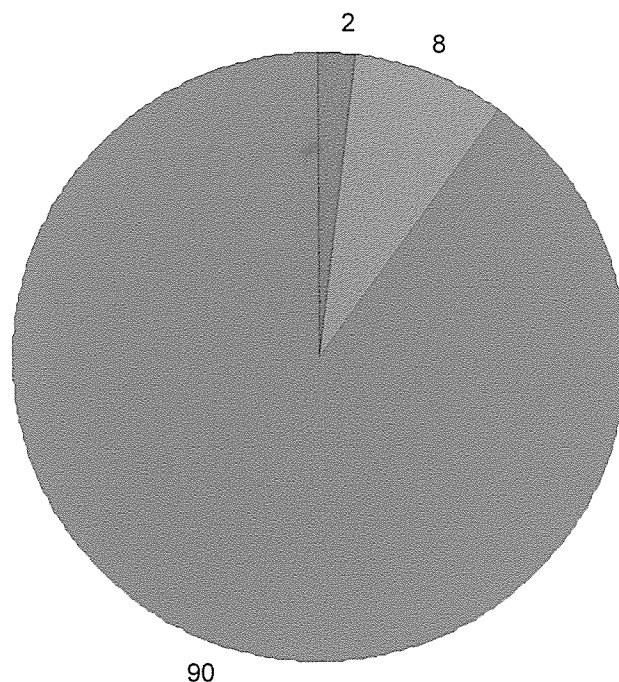


Yes = 10%, No = 85%, Not sure = 5%

Most respondents did not know how many types of inheritance there are. They believed the magistrate's court is a hostile territory.

Do you know how many types of inheritance are there?

Post inheritance survey question 1

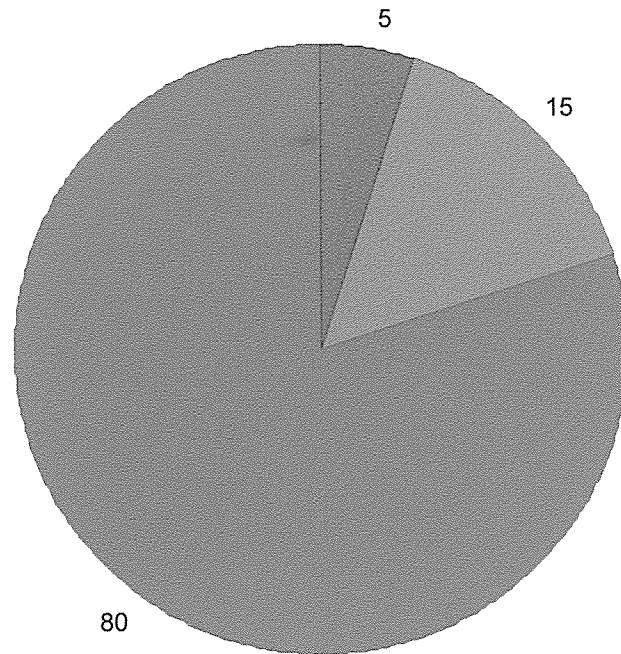


Yes = 90, No = 8%, Not sure = 2%

Note: Rapt attention was given to this subject matter at the empowerment seminar as indicated by the report above. More importantly participants at the seminar were disabused of the idea that the magistrate's court is a hostile territory.

Do you know what is called inheritance in testate?

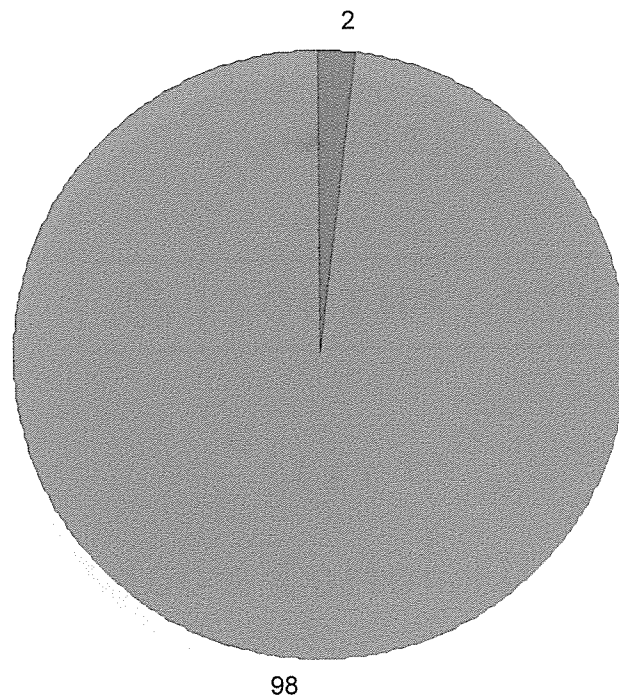
Pre inheritance survey question 2



No= 80%, Yes = 15%, Not sure = 5%

Do you know what is called inheritance under testate?

Post inheritance survey question 2

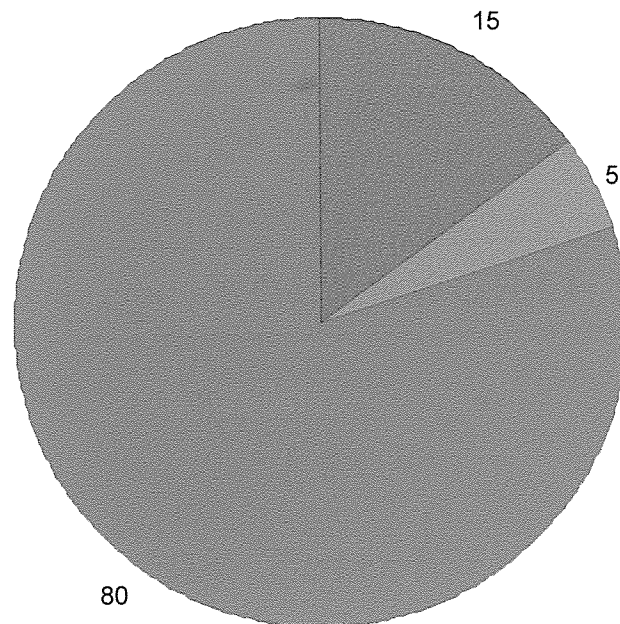


Yes = 98%, Not sure = 2%

Note: After empowerment respondents acquired more knowledge about the subject matter. The idea that writing a will is an indication that death is imminent was no longer a frightening prospect for widows.

Do you know that the magistrate's court is there to ensure fair distribution of property in matters of inheritance under the customary process? It does not matter whether your husband dies leaving a will or not.

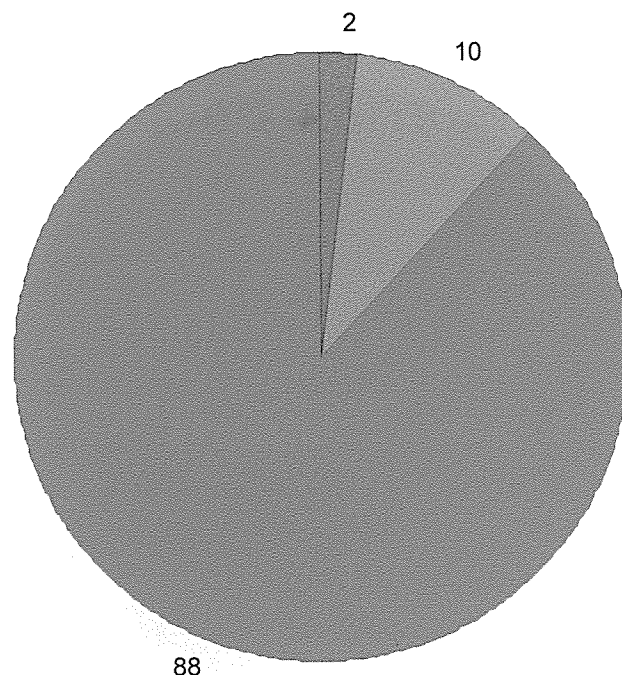
Pre inheritance survey question 3



Yes = 15%, No = 80%, Not sure 5%

Do you know that the magistrate's court is responsible for ensuring fair distribution of property in matters of inheritance under the customary process. It does not matter whether your husband dies leaving a will or not?

Post inheritance survey question 3

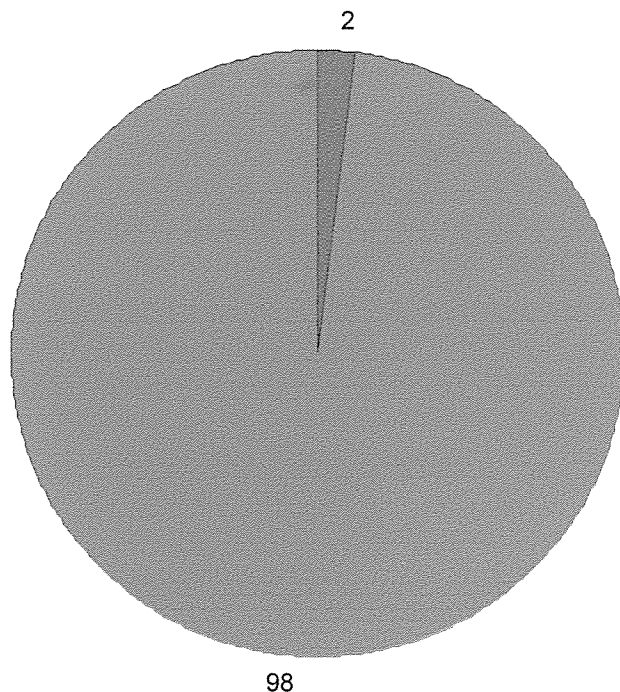


Yes = 88%, No = 3%, Not sure = 7%

Note: After empowerment respondents did not only change their perception about the court system but felt more confident in themselves. Participants were advised to form support circles in which problems connected with inheritance would be aired and discussed.

Do you know that the Legal Resources Foundation and the Women and Law in Southern Africa Research Trust (WLSA), both non-governmental organizations do give guidance on all matters relating to women and children's rights, as well as issues on inheritance under the customary process?

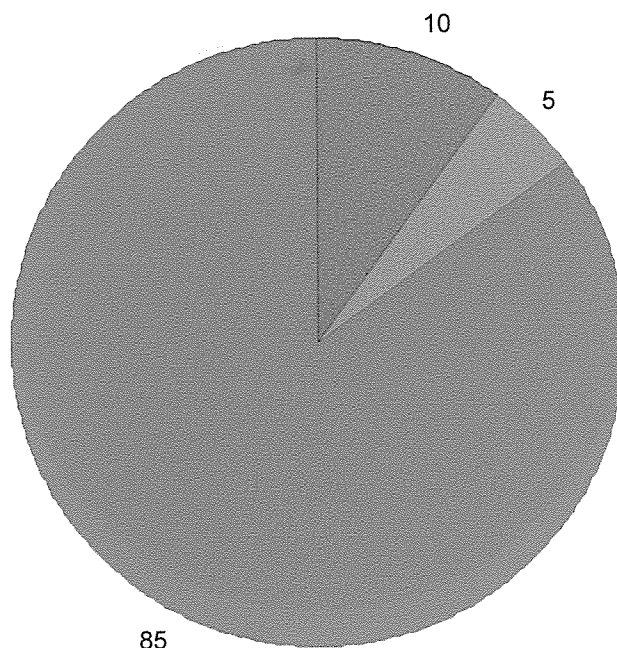
Pre inheritance survey question 4



No = 98%, Not sure = 2%

Do you know that the Legal Resources Foundation and the Women and Law in Southern Africa Research Trust (WLSA), both non-governmental organizations, do offer guidance on women and children's rights, as well as matters of inheritance under the customary processes?

Post inheritance survey question 4

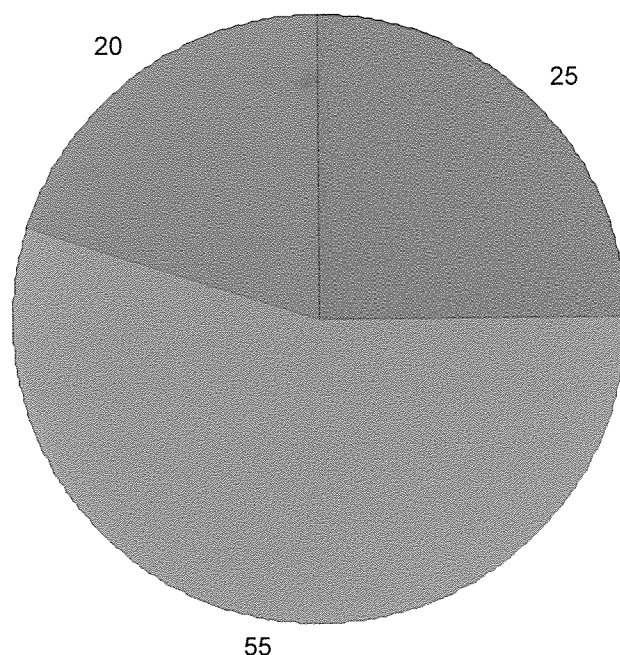


Yes = 85%, No = 5%, Not sure = 10%

Note: Once again after empowerment respondents had better knowledge about what to do in their individual situations with regards to how to assess resources in the community. There were repeated requests for contact with the Legal Resources Foundation as well as the Women and Law in Southern Africa Research Trust, where individual advice will be given on the merit of each problem.

Do you know that in inheritance under the customary process, if a man dies leaving a widow whose marriage was registered and another wife whose marriage was not registered, both will be treated the same way?

Pre inheritance survey question 5

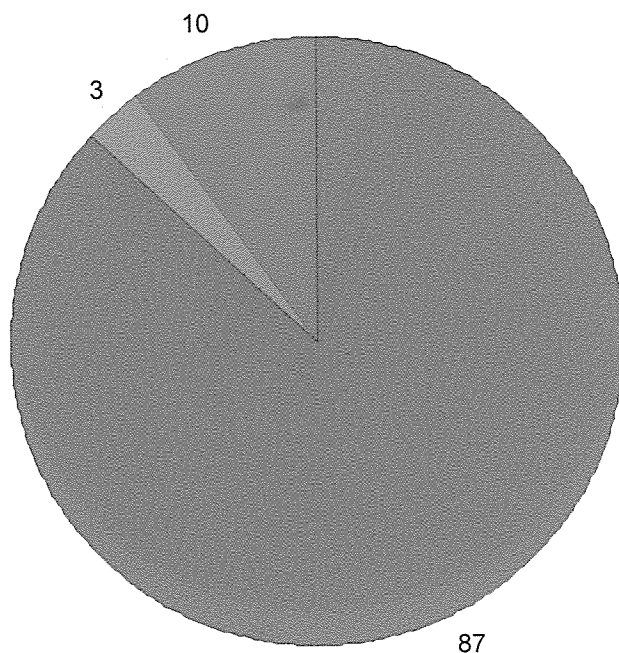


Yes = 25%, No = 55%, Not sure = 20%

Spirited discussion took place during the seminar on inheritance under the customary process. During the tea break a number of widows spoke to the resource person seeking immediate advice to their problems. Separate meeting was set up for in depth discussion of problems with referrals for further action.

Do you know that in inheritance under the customary process, if a man dies leaving a widow whose marriage was registered and another wife whose marriage was not registered, both are treated the same way?

Post inheritance survey question 5

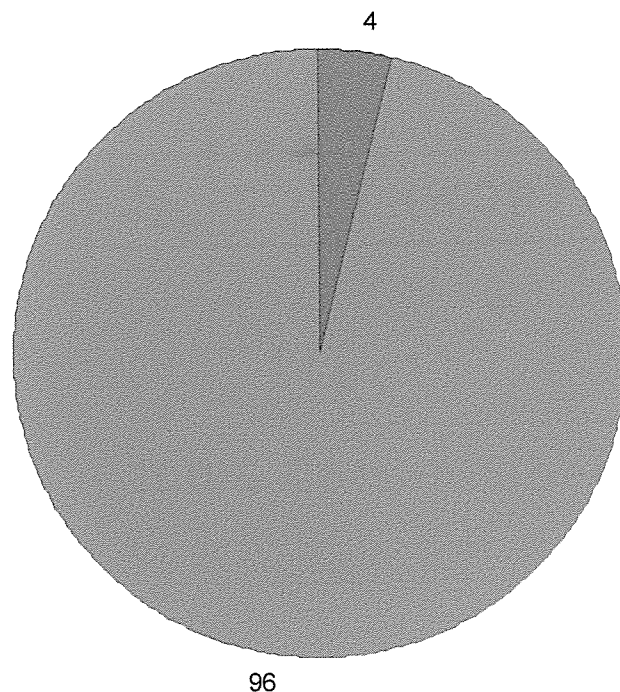


Yes = 87%, No = 3%, Not sure =10%

Note: After empowerment, misconception of this aspect of the law was corrected. Participants appeared more confident, energetic and productive.

My religious beliefs and teachings by the church affect my perception of the practice of *kugarwa nhaka* in a positive way?

Post inheritance survey question 6

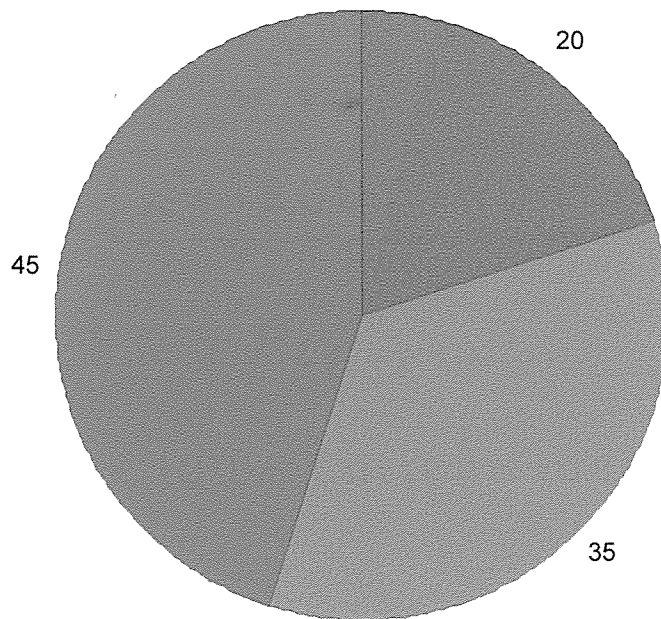


Not positive = 96%, Not sure = 4%

In view of the experience of most respondents they did not think the teachings by the church affect their perception of *kumara nhaka* in positive way.

It is important to maintain good relationship with m late husband's relatives?

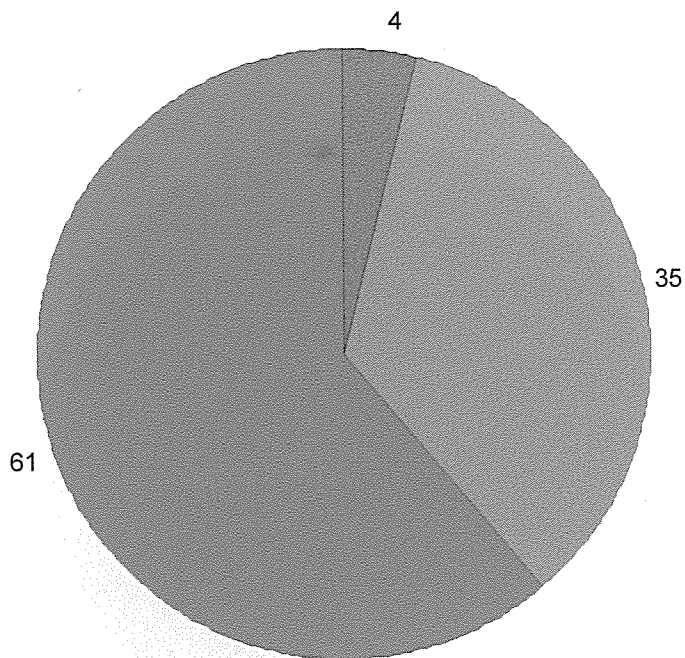
Pre inheritance survey question 7



Very important = 35%, Important = 45%, Not sure = 20%

It is very important to maintain good relationship with my late husband's relatives?

Post inheritance survey question 7

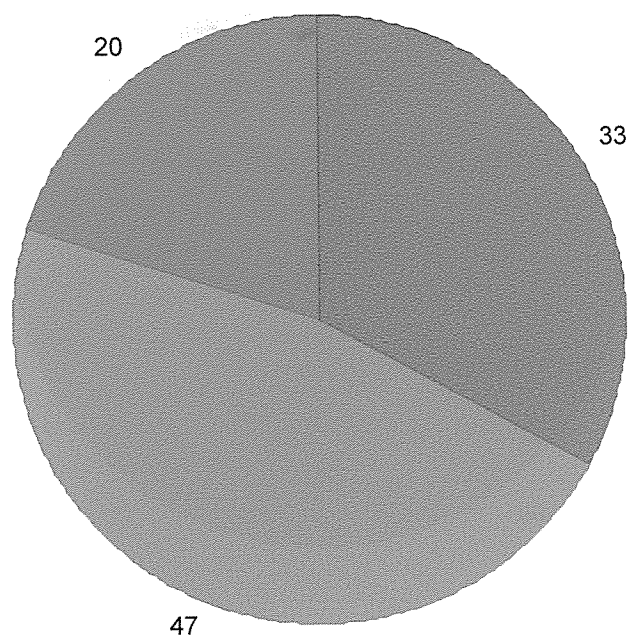


Very important = 35%, Important 61%, Somewhat = 4%

Note: After empowerment not very significant change of perception was observed. Follow up discussions indicated that many of the respondents are still trying to deal with some situations in their families.

How important is the practice of *kugaranhaka* in the community today?

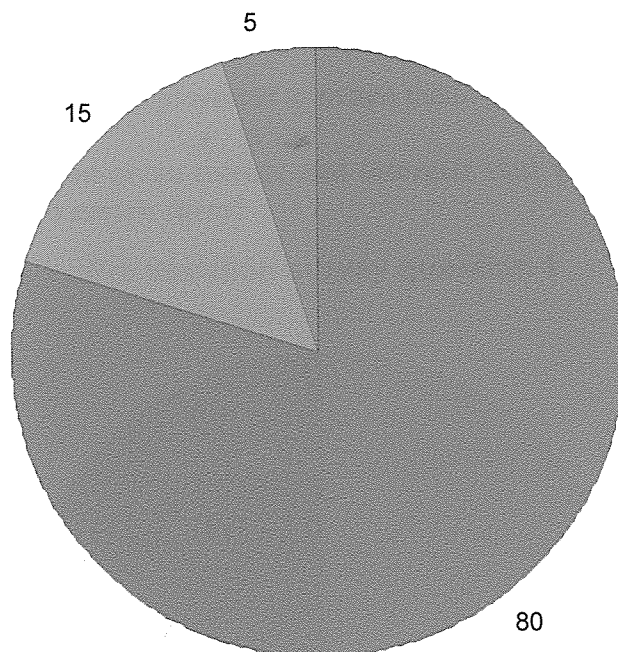
Pre Inheritance survey question 8



Very important = 33%, Important = 47%, Not sure = 20%

How important is the practice of *kugaranhaka* in the community today?

Post inheritance survey question 8



Very Important = 15%, Not important 80%, Not sure = 5%

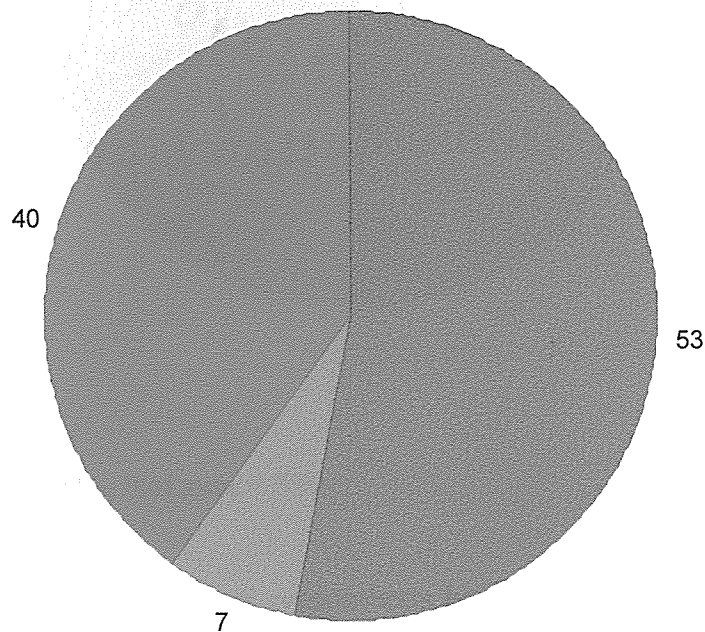
Note: There was a dramatic change of perception after empowerment, which carries a high return. The ladies exumed confiden outlook on life, redy to ake fu responsibility of their business.

APPENDIX C

This section of the questionnaire tries to discover God-given talents, interests and skills to help find or create employment to match them.

Do you know your God-given talents and interests that would help you find or create employment to match them?

Pre vocation survey question 1

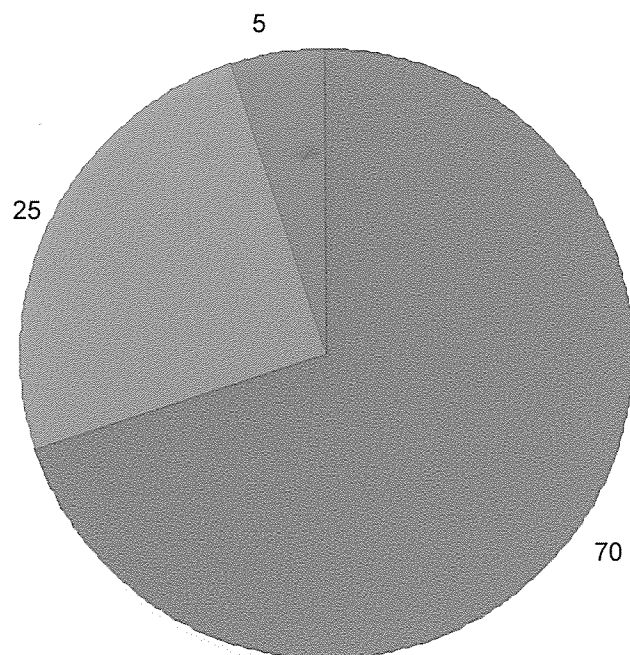


Yes = 40%, No = 53%, Not sure = 7%

Conversations with persons in the focus groups prior to the survey exercise, indicated appreciable number of participants knew the sort of talents they had.

Do you know your God-given talents and interests that would help you find or create employment to match?

Post vocation survey question 1

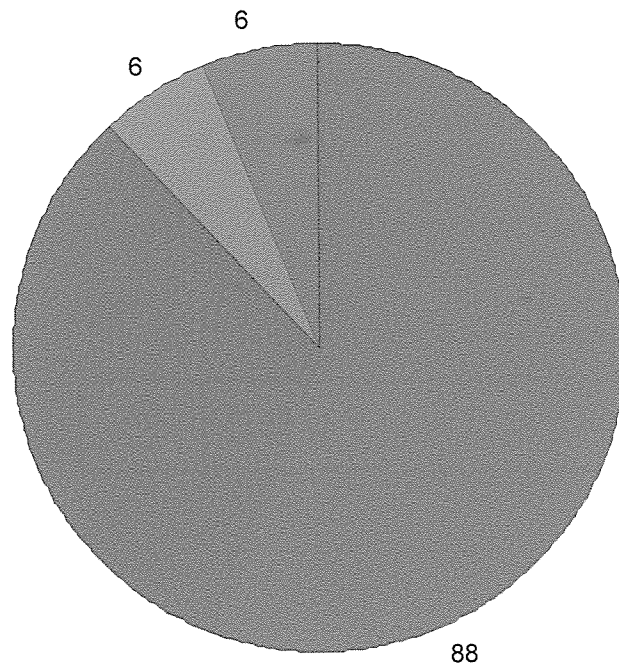


Yes = 70%, No = 25%, Not sure = 5%

Note: After empowerment, most respondents had pleasant surprise of knowing what they would like to do.

Do you need more training to sharpen your skills?

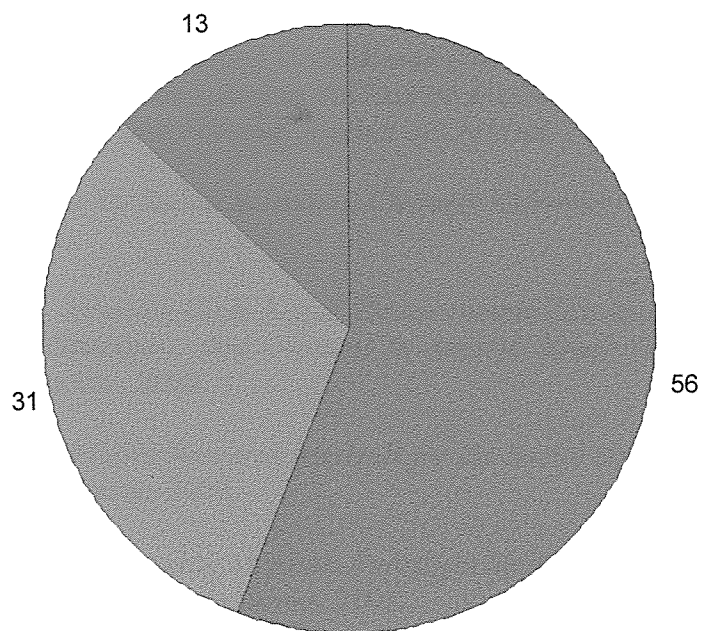
Pre vocation survey question 2



Yes = 88%, No = 6%, Not sure = 6%

How important is it for you to volunteer your time and skills to the church?

Pre vocation question 3



Very Important = 56%, Important = 31%, Somewhat = 13%

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